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COMMENT

It's hard to believe that the British race season is about to begin with the Arenacross series starting imminently and the outdoor season latching on to the back of that like its life depends on it! Then when you throw in a March 1 start to the world championship and a March 16 start to the Maxxis series you know it's time to come out of winter hiding! And despite hating the rain and hating the cold and not particularly liking the wind so much either I'm actually looking forward to it all kicking off as I think we're in for an epic year of racing both here and abroad.

The first round of the AMA Supercross series is done n' dusted and what did we learn from that? Well, aside from the fact that KTM dominated it also showed us that it's about time Max Anstie pulled his frickin' finger out as two of his old sparring partners – Ken Roczen and Jason Anderson – stood on top of the podium with Kenny king of the 450s and Anderson snagging the 250 class. When you also consider that another rider Max used to assert his authority over is now a two-time MX2 world champion then I hope you'll all join me in saying 'c'mon Max'!

2014 is definitely gonna be a telling year for the young Englishman and that's because I believe he's better equipped than ever to challenge for race wins and ultimately the world championship. There's no denying that Steve Dixon armed his riders with rocket ships for the past few years now and the 2014 version of the factory Yamaha is meant to be the best yet. If the two gel then it's game on for sure.

Other Brits rocking the grand prix scene are Tommy Searle (no doubt looking to climb the MX1 ladder after a strong end to his rookie year in the 450 class), Shaun Simpson (who's back with the team who launched his career), Mel Pocock (who joins Woody at HM Plant KTM UK) and big old boy Jake Nicholls (who makes his MX1 debut with Wilvo Forkrent KTM).

And while I'll be following what goes down in Qatar, Thailand and Brazil closely on TV and t'internet it's the domestic championships that have really got me going as they should all be something very special in 2014. With more international riders than ever signed up to UK teams and our own home country heroes stepping up to the challenge like never before then they're definitely two championships to get very excited about.

Of course, to many of you it's your own racing that you care most about and whether you're looking to make the step up from the AMCA Juniors to the Senior class or you're chasing club championship glory in your local schoolboy series then I want to hear all about it. So get sending in your pictures and race reports and then keep 'em coming all year long. I might even share some of them online at www.dirtbikerider.com or possibly even in the magazine.

Enjoy the mag and I'll see you at the races...

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James Stewart was back to his old self at Anaheim as he set the fastest lap on the way to spamming himself



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BRYAN

MACKENZIE



A TRIP TO CALIFORNIA PAYS DIVIDENDS FOR BRY AS HE PICKS UP SOME SX SKILLS AND A BIT OF A TAN...

I'm 35,000 feet in the air and have just had a chat with an old guy outside the toilet who after finding out we race motorbikes naturally knew a guy that knew a guy that sold a bulldog puppy to a guy whose sister's boyfriend's brother's chick's brother raced motorbikes back in the day and the old guy used to ride it too! By his double arm throttle movements it was the model with the two throttles evidently – ahhh that old chestnut.

Everyone knows a guy that knows a guy that used to ride in any language. They say every person in the world can be linked to one another through six people or less and I definitely believe every motocross rider can be linked to everyone in the world through a guy who knows a guy that used to have a bike – even all the way down to an unborn desert tribe child in Uganda.

I'm headed home from a stellar month as a So Cal bro where wearing your socks high, shorts low and half your face covered with a variation of oversized sun goggles – each with different coloured lenses dependant on which pair of shoes you've got on – is order of the day. A land where you can plan your riding/training schedule up to a month in advance because you're guaranteed consistent weather and when you pull up to a gas station to fill your can it pumps VP race fuel and the locals ask where you're off riding without getting into a fight over the legitimacy of your can's ability to hold fuel. We've all been there.

To sweeten the deal this year too I'm coming home with all of my fingers and toes intact and all of my original skin still on unlike the 2013 disaster when I grenaded my big toe after crashing myself into the ground like a dart. I may have lost a bit of lung though after I coughed it up during a bout of American man flu – that sh*t's evolved to take down men the size of Shamu so us smaller guys stack up against it like Rocky versus Drago.

Other than that I managed to stay upright

every time I swung a leg over my bike which must be some kind of record but unfortunately the same can't be said for a couple of my compadres – Booker and a young badass friend of mine that I've mentioned before, 'Jump King' (Billy King) who both fell fowl to supercross training.

Supercross is a savage bitch and I've never really appreciated that until now. I've always just figured I'm a motocross guy because there's never been any need for me to polish up skills on a SX track because it's not been a part of my career. However, with our commitment to the Arenacross series we thought it would be a good idea to include a bit into our pre-season training regime to try and find a little shazzamm for the arena floor.

I learnt a lot in a short space of time – particularly how brutal it really is. I swear those AMA guys make it look really easy and you don't fully appreciate that until you roll round a full AMA spec supercross track out there. There is literally very, very little room for mistakes and Jordan I'm sure would attest to that. He's a really technical rider who fits in pretty well out there but one tiny mistake on his behalf escalated real quick and before he knew it he was flattening out his perm up a Pala takeoff and nursing a sore shoulder.

Jump King, well he's also more than established enough even at 14-years old to be handling supercross but a small miscalculation of a full sized triple and he tried to shape his wrist to spell 'SX' and doubled the amount of tibs and fibs he has! The poor kid was in plaster up to his nuts on both legs and his left wrist too. I think we'll chalk that one up to experience – never case full sized triples. Cheers for the heads-up, Bill.

Personally though I was having an awesome time building my confidence every time I was on track which was a bit strange to be doing sh*t that I've never done before at my age and with all the experience I've got in riding over the years. I found myself calculating everything I did

before doing it for the first time, unlike the old Bry that would have ran before he could walk. I'm pumped now that I've grown out of that guy though, he sucked and had me getting my arse wiped by someone else more times than once!

Anyway, riding aside we done the usual cool customary sh*t that is mandatory when you come to Cali too. My good lady Ash, Bro and BC's fiancée Emma (aye that's right BC popped the question last month and so did Bunga – congrats, suckers) came out so we hit up Pro Circuit and chatted sh*t to all the guys over there who look after us so well and thanked everyone for what they did for us last year and what we are doing with them again for this season.

We showed them around the usual shops like Langstons, Chaparral, Troy Lee etc and took them to the factory test tracks a few times to watch everyone prep for the new season. Of course we picked up A1 too and that was nothing short of awesome. We had mega seats and seen some pretty cool stuff unfold which online and TV coverage doesn't pick up.

In all honesty, I believe if you haven't been to an AMA Supercross before I'd highly recommend sticking it on the bucket list to witness before you kick it. It really is unlike any thing else and something everyone should see once in their life.

But if you don't fancy dragging your ass half way around the world how about visiting the British Arenacross series instead? It's definitely on a much smaller scale but should be impressive none the less. It starts mid January and should be pretty cool. Worth checking out, no?

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JAKE

NICHOLLS



AFTER SEVEN SWEET YEARS OF DATING BLU, YAK FINALLY FOLLOWS BEYONCÉ'S ADVICE AND PUTS A RING ON IT...

Hello and happy New Year to you all – I hope you and I have a successful 2014. The year's already flying by it seems with the main bit of industry news coming from the US. After the hype up to the first SX it didn't disappoint. I had Stewie down as my favourite but I had a strong suspicion that he would crash his brains out like he did. But I was very surprised with Roczen. He rode so well all race and never got flustered at all – the ride that he produced was something that I was expecting out of Tomac but he wasn't so lucky after being landed on in his heat race and he had to sit it out.

I was genuinely happy for KTM after all there time and effort trying to crack the US market and get the yanks to believe in the brand to win both mains and a 1-2 in the 450s is a dream come true I'm sure. From here on I believe there will be more surprises before it all settles down a bit. I still think RV or RD will take the title although it was good to see Reed back on it but Christ he looks chunky though.

Talking of chunk I've pretty much lost all of my off-season excess now – it's hard not too the amount of training and riding we do at our level. I've really cranked up the riding since the New Year which is nice although it feels strange but nice to be at home at the moment because for the last three years I've spent my Januarys in the New Zealand summer. It's good though as my track is pretty much at its best this time of year – in the summer its pants.

I love my time over in NZ but I was away so much in 2012 and 2013 that I got a little homesick so I decided not to go over there this year. I keep getting sent pictures from BT of the sun and the beach but I'm not that jealous as I'm happy cracking on and working hard here.

I feel pretty good at the moment. I've started

to push on the 450 a bit and it's going well. I've had times where things have felt tough and awkward but that's good as I need to feel that in practice to learn how to overcome it on the new bike. I feel strong on it too not that I've never felt like strength was a weakness for me on any bike but as I said before I changed my program a lot this off season to become a bit stronger all round and it has made a difference to my feeling on the bike.

And I'm enjoying it. For years now I've done a similar training schedule each year and always quite enjoyed it but having new goals in the gym and seeing my body develop is nice. I coach myself nowadays, after years of receiving advice from some of the best riders and trainers around I've learnt what works and I knew exactly coming in to this off-season what I needed to change on my body ahead of this year.

Training is a hobby of mine and it has to be because it's something I do so much and something that is so vital in my life that I have no choice but for it to be my hobby. I'm constantly looking for new things to try and always learning different stuff and most importantly I enjoy it – it's not hard for me to do it.

Don't get me wrong I have those days when I have to peel myself off the sofa in the afternoon to go the gym after a tough morning – that's only human – but I do enjoy it because if I didn't I wouldn't be able to be as fit as I am. I sometimes think that it's something that my brain has done to make training easier for me, perhaps it's lying to itself and kidding me that I enjoy training because it knows I've got no choice but to do it. Who knows but I'd like to think I'll keep fit after racing and to keep riding but it's very easy to sit here and say that now.

I'm a big fan of Christmas. I'm not mad into

the present thing but I love everything else – the food, the decorations etc – and I loved how the house smelt when the trees went up. I was particularly excited on Christmas morning too as I had a little surprise for my partner Blu. We've been together for seven years and she's my best friend and generally mega to me.

So first thing I gave her a hamper that was all wrapped up. She opened it and pulled out a mixed array of foods that because she can't eat anything with gluten in she couldn't eat. She was kinda half smiling half growling when pulling all these things out until eventually she got to the bottom where there was a small box with an engagement ring inside.

As she opened it I sat to her side in my pants then jumped up and pulled up my t-shirt revealing some awful handwriting on my stomach that had been written with a sh*tty CD marker. The words said 'will u marry me!' She was over the moon, ummed and ahed a bit then said yes. So it set up a good Christmas day for us spent with our loved ones, feeling lucky.

I hope you all had a good festive period too. I can't wait to race and I'll be at Hawkstone.

Cheers for reading folks, anat! See you soon.
Go hard #45, anat.



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OUR STATESIDE COMPADRE CONSIDERS WHY JAMES STEWART GETS SUCH A HARD TIME FROM THE FANS...

In the USA, when it comes to public opinion, there are different rules for different racers and James Stewart always seems to be at the wrong end of it. James is a polarizing figure in American MX. People either love him or they hate him and some people are on both sides of it dependant upon the situation.

At the Monster Energy Cup as he battled with Ryan Villopoto, the crowd was on its feet cheering and the majority of the crowd was happy when he won the event. This probably has to do with the fact that he hasn't been dominant in recent years. But there are unrealistic expectations of Stewart that no other racers have to deal with.

A good example of this just popped up at the Anaheim supercross. Stewart came from nearly last in the first turn and was passing Ken Roczen for the race lead when he swapped out in the whoops and went down hard. When he got up, he realized his handlebars were horribly bent and he called it a night and walked back to the pits.

As far as I was concerned, it was a real bummer because the race really seemed to be his and the track just bit him. But that was it.

But to watch the banter on the internet you'd think Stewart is the worst thing ever to happen to American motocross.

First, there was a picture of his handlebars that someone had Tweeted and that picture was placed alongside a classic picture of Danny 'Magoo' Chandler racing with his handlebars bent in a similar way and he was hanging on where the crossbar meets the handlebar.

This is a ridiculous comparison for a few reasons –

1) Magoo did that at a natural-terrain motocross race, not a supercross.

2) Magoo always did things that most guys wouldn't do which is a big part of why he was always hurt and never won a championship.

This is a situation where no matter what Stewart did he would've been criticized for it. He walked off, so people say he has a bad attitude and that he lacks determination.

But if he'd have picked up the bike and rolled around the track, getting in the way of other racers, he'd have been criticized for that too and if he'd have gotten back into the race and tried to go fast, then crashed again – and maybe gotten hurt – he'd have been criticized for that.

If he lacked determination he wouldn't have gone from nearly last place to be battling for the lead when he went down. James Stewart is a lot of things but someone who is "lacking determination" is certainly not one of them.

In 2010, Stewart won round one at Anaheim

then caused a huge crash when he cut across the track over a triple and took Kyle Partridge down with him. It was a stupid move in traffic but that stuff happens in racing. Stewart fractured both bones in his left wrist in the crash but still qualified for the main event through the LCQ.

Even more astounding though was that a week later he not only raced Anaheim 2 (round three) but he battled for the win before being forced to settle for third. He finished on the podium at the top level of our sport with a broken wrist! He bowed out of the series at that point, because he knew he couldn't tough out the pain enough to still be a championship contender. But if that doesn't show that he's tough, and that he's a competitor, what does?

And that's just the tip of the iceberg with Stewart. There are at least a half-dozen similar stories during his career but people don't give him credit for them.

Why?

Hmmm... What's different about James Stewart compared to, say, Ryan Villopoto or Chad Reed? Exactly.



THE GREATEST COLLECTION OF OFF-ROAD NEWS STORIES KNOWN TO MAN AND BEAST...

Words by **Bryan MacKenzie** and **Jonty Edmunds**

It's Supercross season! Quite possibly the most anticipated event throughout the world, A1, has been and gone and it was quite a show.

Kenny Roczen took a surprise win at the first round of the 2014 450 AMA supercross championship. Rumours circulated in the weeks leading up to A1 that the 450 class rookie had broken his arm but he put those to bed sharpish claiming it to be false. But since his emphatic win, sponsor, Pete Fox from Fox racing, posted a pic on Instagram showing Roczen actually in a full cast above his elbow only three weeks ago which in my mind makes this win even sweeter. Roczen earned it and the #94 has officially elevated himself to player status in the elite group that resides at the front of the SX field.

However, RV had it all laid out on a plate at the start of the main event as he took the holeshot and put some breathing room between himself and Roczen. But nine laps in and RV washed the front in the turn before the sand section and never chased the 'W' after

that. Maybe last season's opener – where he crashed twice and started the season 16th – was in the back of his mind as he didn't show too much disappointment in his post race interviews also mentioning that he's in a better position in points now than some years – maturing perhaps? Next he'll be cutting down on overusing LOL in texts and decide that hunting is cruel...

Is it bad luck that follows James Stewart about or just bad decisions? It sure looked like bad luck as JS7 never put a foot wrong for the 15 laps that he was a part of the main event. He rode a calculated race letting it settle before picking guys off one by one until he was on the rear wheel of Roczen. But a bizarre moment in the whoops turned his RM-Z into a mechanical bull which he rode out before throwing away bending his bars to resemble an off-duty male porn star's work tool. He's lucky that he was thrown clear of the final whoop and avoided carrying his nose in a sling too.

Reed ain't done and after a forgettable '13 where the 'real' Chad Reed failed to show many

people had written the 'old dog' off especially when he opted to take on a Kawasaki 450 after the disaster he had with them before. But Reed came in hot with his sh*t tight and impressed everyone by holding pace with the fastest guys at the head of the pack. Reed also won a few extra fans when he brought out his son, Tate, kitted out in replica Chad Reed Shift gear for opening ceremonies to ride a lap around behind him on his PW50. Nice touch.

Tomac and Weimer were victims of the season opener after being tackled by NFL-sized Weston Peick on the opening lap of their heat race. Tomac was down and out for the night and geared down into his civvies with muscle spasms in his shoulder while Weimer saddled up for the heat race and rode cautiously in the main to salvage something from the first round. Tomac may even miss round two in Phoenix too but will decide on the day of the race whether it will be safe to ride or not.

Mike Alessi came out the traps of the first heat race of 2014 like...well, like Mike Alessi does. Guessing the drop of the gate he



The battle between K-Roc and Bubba at A1 was just warming up nicely...

grabbed an insane holeshot which would rank up there with some of the best you'll ever see and the MotoConcepts rider went on to take his first SX win – albeit only in a heat race – and had an emotional breakdown during his post race interview to potentially win over a couple of haters but most likely ammo up the majority of them. He tried the same tact in the main and it backfired leaving him wedged behind the steel.

The AMA have brought back semis. The format of Heat race, Semi, LCQ, Main is back on the agenda and I don't actually know why. After a bit of spit ballin' with a group of top bench racers we came up with the theory that it's to prevent catastrophes like the ballers of the 450 class not qualifying through incidents and whatnot like has happened to RV and Stew in the past. They've also upped the mains to take 22 guys instead of the customary 20 to make room for some more of the 'little guys' of the supercross pits.

The 250s pitched up some best racing of the night. Dean Wilson and Zach Osborne were

the two to watch for most of the 15-lap main. The two of them tied for the top qualifying spot during the afternoon practice/qualifying by producing the exact same lap time. In the main they were providing most of the entertainment too by passing each other numerous times before Osborne finally stuck it to an injured Wilson who was carrying some battle scars from a monumental get-off mid-week.

Cole Seely and Jason Anderson set the pace through the entire main event. It's interesting that no one had really thrown Seely's name in the mix prior to the opener but he sure delivered by consistently holding the edge over Anderson and the rest of the pack for most of the moto. Seely was mugged on the second-to-last turn though as he took a cautious nice-guy approach to three lappers and Anderson went for the jugular slamming it up the inside. Seely, to me, had a shot at returning the same super aggressive move on the final turn but bailed out and took a disappointing silver. He needs to toughen up if he doesn't want that kind thing happening too often because now



YES, JEFFREY!

HERLINGS IN FOR HAWKSTONE...

Now only weeks away the Hawkstone International line up continues to grow with MX2 world champion Jeffrey Herlings, Tommy Searle, Tyla Rattray, Todd Waters, Jake Nicholls, Shaun Simpson, Mel Pocock, Brad Anderson, Matiss Karro and the entire Oakleaf Kawasaki team (possibly including Tyler Villopoto) the latest to confirm their attendance at the event on February 23. As normal the event will feature separate MX2 and MX1 class battles before bringing the best of each together for the mixed-capacity Super Final.

With the opening GP of the season going off in Qatar just one week after Hawkstone it's the very last chance for the world championship riders to gauge their speed and fitness against their competition. Throw in the UK's leading riders n'all and it's a day out not to be missed. More details about the event can be found at www.hawkstoneinternationalmx.com.



BROWN HEADS HUSQVARNA

US VET TO LEAD HUSKY IN 2014

Determined to make a mark on the off-road scene in the US, Husqvarna Motorcycles have secured the services of veteran Mike Brown to head their four-rider team.

Brown – who placed as runner-up to Taddy Blazusiak in the 2013 AMA EnduroCross Championship – will be the Husqvarna's main hope for glory in 2014.

With Brown departing from the KTM awning the space was quickly filled by Taylor Robert. Fifth in the 2013 endurocross series, Robert has spent the majority of his young professional career with Kawasaki. Switching to KTM for the coming season, he'll be hoping to pick up where Brown left off.

Jack Lee roasts his way to victory



WILD N' WOOLLY!

JACK LEE TAKES TITLE #3

For most of us Boxing Day is spent lay in front of the telly snacking on tasty treats while watching a bad movie or four. But there is an alternative and even on the day after Christmas it's possible to get a dirt bike fix at an annual epic called the Wild and Woolly. One of the oldest races in the country, this annual Boxing Day mudfest is all about raising money for local charities and this year's bog slog is no different with

plenty of cash raised for worthy causes in the Northampton area.

Two-time winner Jack Lee gets off to the perfect start arriving at the first water crossing with a considerable lead – an advantage he'll not give up. Lapping the entire field three times the Gas Gas rider absolutely dominates proceedings beating brother Chas and James Barnwell home to take home his third Wild and Woolly title...



KTM TEAM SHAKE UP

MEO MOVES TO E2 AND NAMBO GOES 4T

The KTM Enduro Factory Team has been busy during the winter months finalising the arrangement of their attack on the 2014 EWC season.

Following his double Enduro 1 title, Frenchman Antoine Meo mixes things up and heads to the Enduro 2 class where he'll join rivals Alex Salvini, Pela Renet and former teammate Johnny Aubert.

With Meo vacating E1, Christophe Nambotin takes his place in the quarter litre class alongside Cristobal Guerrero. Filling Nambo's shoes, Ivan Cervantes moves to E3 with the team's new recruit Aussie Matt Phillips.

EVO BLING!

SHINY SWAG FOR YOUR PRE-'89 RACE MACHINE

Some of you may know the name Phil Denton Engineering as the guys to call when it comes to Twinshock and EVO Hondas. They are now offering these ultra high quality components that are beautifully machined from 6AL4v Titanium for Honda Evo machines but if you ask nicely they can manufacture equivalent components for other makes and for modern machines too! Give them a call on **01492 641345** and tell 'em DBR sent you...

If you think Phil Denton's bolts look good then you should see his nuts...



SPANISH GOLD!

WIN 10 GRAND WITH REDSAND

If you plan on doing some pre-season training in Spain then the RedSand MX and Enduro Park near Valencia may be worth a visit.

Aside from their awesome enduro tracks and two MXGP spec motocross tracks they are also offering the opportunity for riders to win 10,000 euros. During the first week of February 3-6 they'll be scouting talent in order to offer some lucky rider a top, top prize. So if you're in the area, dust off your CV and wear your Sunday best. For more details and to register log on to www.redsandmxpark.com before January 20. Amateurs and semi-pros only!

GREEN DREAM!

APICO TEAM UP WITH LPE FOR 2014

Steve James has secured the services of Gert Krestinov for an all-out attack on the Maxxis MX1 title in 2014 and he'll be getting a little help from his new friends at Apico who join the squad as title sponsors. The team will now be known as LPE Apico Kawasaki and as well as running Bert in MX1 have secured the services of young Estonian Erki Kahro.

Vesty, Steve James and Scott Cannon get acquainted



Anderson will think he owns him.

You will be forgiven for thinking Dean Ferris had a pretty disappointing first showing on the supercross big stage coming from his MX credentials but it's a whole new world out there under the stadium lights. Ferris qualified for his first main event at his very first try and after only a month of supercross practice on the KTM. After seeing him at the test track I expect Ferris to improve into the top-10 by the end of the West coast series.

Cooper Webb had a slightly under the radar showing at Anaheim which was his professional supercross debut. Webb came from a long way back to reach fifth place and moved right on to the rear wheel of Wilson by the end of play. Webb is now working with SA export Gareth Swanepoel who got the gig of training this wonder-kid after Swanny used to race for the same team as Webb and worked hard while he did so. The team figured that with Webb's skills and Swanny's effort that they could create a monster and I can guarantee you that Cooper Webb will deliver this season.

Valentin Telliet and the BUD racing crew have given up on GPs this season to chase the dream in the US of A. Telliet always fancied himself as a bit of an SX guy so made the commitment to contest the full West coast



NEWSHOUND



Jonny Walker will be in action a fair bit over the next few months



Taillet yanks the LCQ holey



Dean Ferris had a steady start to his SX career

series and the kid qualified for the main in his first ever try – much like Ferris – but after a crash finished the night 17th. His flair and style for the job is clearly evident but he wastes a lot of time trying to look cool and pull old and new-school cross-ups which definitely weren't saving him any time and a couple of his turn-downs must have had his clipper going as he punched out the laps.

Away from supercross and the month of January that can only mean one thing – Dakar. As we hit our print deadlines the two-week race is in full swing in South America. And already us Brits have something to cheer for.

After years of waiting, Sam Sunderland has put Great Britain back on the rally raid map by winning stage two of the race with HRC Honda. With Sam based in the United Arab Emirates you'll be forgiven for wondering who this Sunderland chap is but in his short time in the sport he's already proving the real deal.

Sadly Sam's event ended before it really had a chance to begin, joining the list of early retirees at the start of day four.

Closer to home and it's Hard Enduro that takes centre stage. While we've lost the traditional early season The Tough One – it's moved to April and Hawstone Park – the maestro 'Fast Eddy' has been quick to replace

the vacant date with his Fast Eddy Extreme at Tong on January 12.

With its British Championship status it has attracted headliners David Knight, Graham Jarvis and Jonny Walker out of their winter hibernation. With Knight committing to Hard Enduro on Sherco machinery for 2014, Tong should become a very interesting example of how the year might unfold.

Knighter won there last year and is damn hungry to grab a repeat victory. Steve Ireland's WOR Events are also running the inaugural 'Sucker Punch' extreme in North Wales on February 2 – just two weeks before Hell's Gate in Italy – so these pre-season run outs will definitely blow the rust off 'em before the year begins in earnest.

But in between all that we head over to South America during the tail end of January. With the Dakar Rally complete, it's the turn of SuperEnduro to grab some headlines with rounds three and four of the series taking place in Belo Horizonte, Brazil and Guadalajara in Mexico.

Last time out it was Knight that topped the podium when he beat Taddy Blazusiak on home turf. It was a victory that caught even Blazusiak by surprise but it's one that has been building for some time. At round one in Liverpool,

DK101 was still dialling in his Sherco and needed a couple of race miles under his belt to build some confidence.

Winning in Poland has certainly done that and the Manxman now only trails his Polish buddy by 14 points. The back-to-back rounds in South America are going to be interesting to watch but if you can't make those be sure to hit up the penultimate round in Barcelona when the series returns to Europe on February 9. With a bit of World Trials Championship action also on the night it's one not to miss!

And finally after numerous months of 'will they or won't they leave the EWC' Fabrizio Azzalin's CH Racing team has confirmed they'll stay for 2014.

But the bigger news is that they will do so with Sherco. Left without manufacture support following the reshuffling at Husqvarna, the future initially appeared to be bleak for Azzalin – who's fronted Husqvarna's EWC effort for the last two decades.

But after negotiating with Sherco, the Italian has joined forces with the French manufacture. Retaining the services of Matti Seistola – who will run in E3 – and Lorenzo Santolino while gaining Aussie Jessica Gardiner, the Sherco CH Racing looks like a solid outfit for 2014.



HZ

MX GOGGLES

HZ are a relatively new goggle company on the block but they've already turned a lot of heads in a short time including that of seven time world champion Antonio Cairoli who created his own Neox 222 line with the HZ brand. As well as being the goggle of choice for the seven-time world champion his factory KTM team-mate Ken de Dycker is a fan n'all. Now available in the UK through the good old guys and girls from Malcolm Rathmell Sport grab a pair while they're hot!

Price: HZ from £65 Neox from £80
Supplier: mrs ltd.co.uk
Contact: 01423 772885



TCX

PRO 2.1 BOOTS

TCX's top of the line motocross boot – the Pro2.1 – is now available in white/orange and black/fluo as well as all the usuals like white, black and so on and so forth. One of the highest tech boots on the market, the Pro2.1 is undoubtedly a top performer and if the new colour ways float your boat we'd heartily recommend you hook yo' sen up!

Price: £329.99
Supplier: nevis.uk.com
Contact: 01425 478936



Airoh

WILD WOLF AVIATOR HELMET

If you're looking for an alternative to a Monster or Rockstar energy drink logo adorned lid how about taking a gander at this Wild Wolf one from Airoh. Basically what you're looking at here is a Wild Wolf logoed Aviator which is Airoh's top of the range MX helmet which is light, well vented and awesomely protective so if you like the look we'd heartily recommend you treat yourself while stocks last!

Price: £444
Supplier: mrs ltd.co.uk
Contact: 01423 772885



Apico

HOURLY/TACH METER

Hour meters are more or less an essential purchase for all serious racers who wanna keep their steeds in tiptop condition. This smart looking one from Apico displays RPM as well as recording engine running time and is available with or without a mounting bracket depending on your needs.

Price: from £30
Supplier: apico.co.uk
Contact: 01282 473190



Fly Racing

F2 CARBON HELMETS

Fly Racing spice up the helmet wars with their F2 Carbon helmet that aircraft grade carbon fibre and Kevlar composite construction, aggressive styling and awesome ventilation too. Available now the F2 Carbon comes in solid black or white or with the Dubstep design which is certain to get you noticed out on the track!

Price: Solid £179.99 Dubstep £199.99
Supplier: racefx.com
Contact: 0845 450 1448



THOR

RV2 LIMITED RACEWEAR

If you're a fan of what Ryan Villopoto was wearing at Anaheim 1 then get on the blower to your local THOR dealer because a limited run of this very same kit is available to buy... *checks watch* right now!

Price: Jersey £44.99 Pants £139.99
Supplier: madison.co.uk
Contact: 0870 034 7226

Oakley

CASUAL CLOTHING AND SWAG

Three more ace bits of kit from Oakley this month in the form of a super-sweet jacket, a cool compression top and for all you iPad users out there a pretty rad case to keep your Apple tablet safe n' secure.

Price: Compression top £35

Beltline PL jacket £155

B1B iPad case

Supplier: uk.oakley.com

Contact: 00800 6255 3985



1:



2:



STUFF

Freestyle Xtreme

CLOTHING PACKAGES

If you struggle to figure out what goes with what when you're out shopping for yourself or a loved one then fear not because Freestyle Xtreme have got you covered with their new collections and the clever part about it all is that you can buy as little or as much as you like from each range. Cool eh?

1: WINTER PADDOCK

Metal Mulisha Black Emma Jacket £74.99
Fox Black Uitimate Womens Pant £41.99
Fox White Valor Womens T-Shirt £20.99
Osiris Htone NYC Slim Shoe £59.99

Supplier: freestylextreme.com

Contact: 0117 304 9561

2: KEN FROM THE BLOCK

One Industries Black Monster Touchdown New Era Cap £24.99
DC Black Ken Block Spin Star T-Shirt £22.99
Fox Racing Blue Kicker 2 Backpack £33.99
Fox Racing Dirty Rinse Throttle Jeans £49.99
DC Black Battleship Travis Pastrana Pro Spec Shoe £77.99
Hoonigan Black Racing Division Embroidery Zip Hoody £63.99
GoPro HD Hero 2 Outdoor Edition Camera £299.99

3:



4:



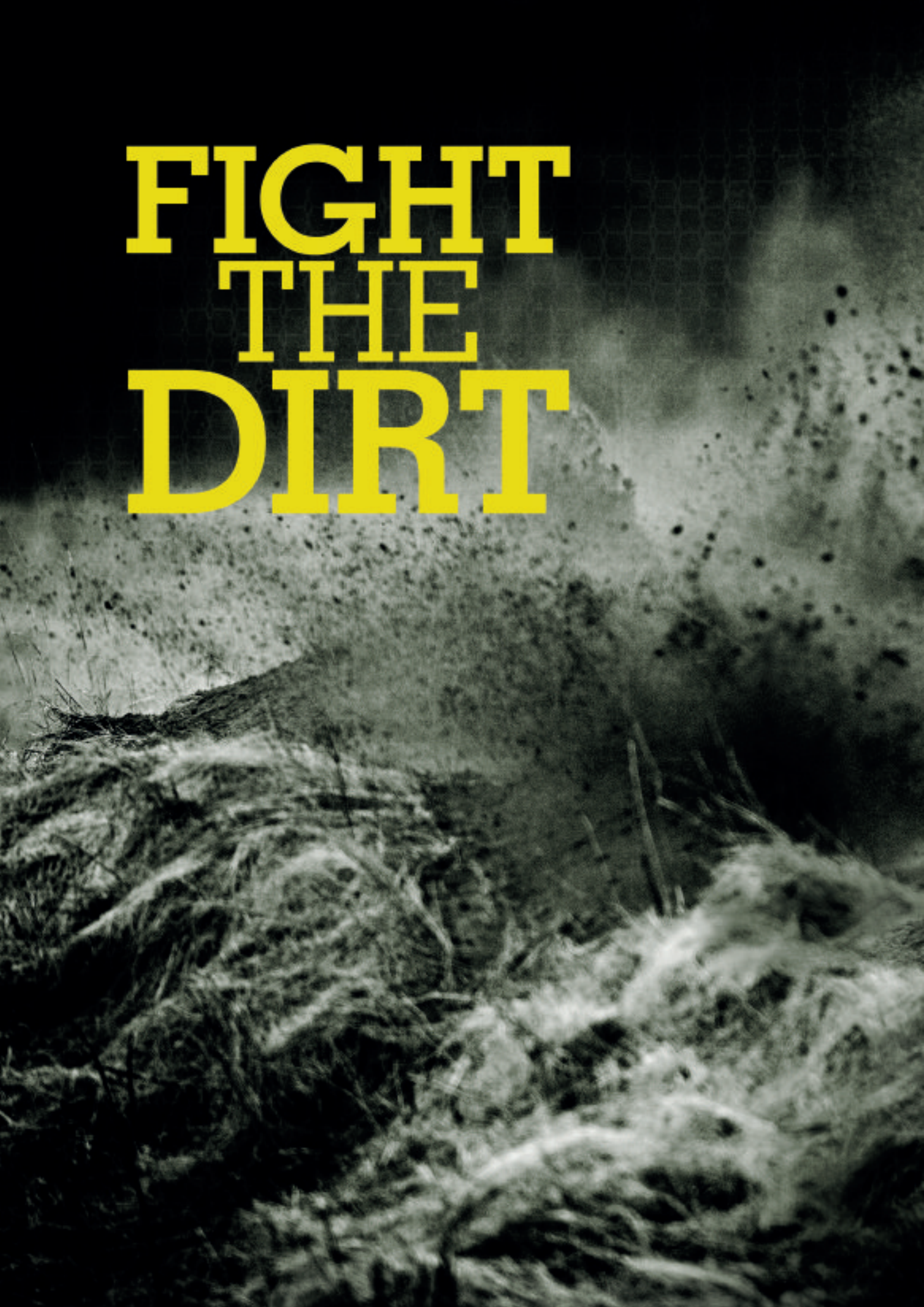
3: TRAVELLING TRACK SIDE

Fox Racing Black White RedBull X-Fighters Core Flexfit Cap £24.99
Fox Racing Flame Red Racer Zip Hoody £71.99
Fox Racing Dirty Rinse Duster Jeans £49.99
DC White Red Nyjah Hi Shoe £72.99
Fox Racing Matte Black 2013 V2 Helmet £159.99
Fox Racing 2014 Shuttle Given Bag £139.99

4: READY TO RIP

New Era Scarlet MLB Basic New York Yankees Cap £24.99
Fox Racing 2014 Radeon Jersey £29.99
Fox Racing 2014 Radeon Pant £81.99
100% Prium Red Racecraft Goggle £59.99
Fox Racing 2014 V4 Carbon Reveal Helmet £379.99
Alpinestars White Tech 10 Boots £469.99

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ANAHEIM ANGELS!

K-ROC CLAIMS THE WIN WHILE STEWART STRIKES
OUT IN THE AMA SUPERCROSS SEASON OPENER...

Words and photos by **Steve Cox**





There are a few big differences between the AMA MX/SX season and the GP season in Europe. First, the AMA has 30 races in a season whereas the GPs have just over half that. And secondly, the reality of the AMA series is that the racers spend eight months out of the year riding, racing and preparing for supercross. Even the settings that AMA racers run outdoors are essentially based on their supercross settings – just a little softer.

From the end of the AMA Motocross series in August to the end of the AMA Supercross series in May, AMA racers spend basically all of their time on supercross. And from September until the beginning of January everything the racers and their teams do is in preparation for early January and the season opener at Anaheim – Anaheim 1.

With all of this preparation you'd think that everyone would be completely prepared and as such Anaheim 1 would be a definite indicator of how the rest of the series is going to go. Often, this isn't the case. It's as if the hype and anticipation of round one causes everything to go awry. Racers who will go on to win 10 of the rounds have bad races. Other racers win the first round then never sniff winner's circle again. Many years, round one has to get out of the way before everyone calms down enough for the series to play out the way it's supposed to.

In 2013, for example, defending champ Ryan Villopoto had a terrible race at Anaheim 1 even though he had won the event to start both of his previous championship seasons in 2011 and 2012. He still pulled off the championship in 2013, obviously. It's too early to tell if 2013 is one of those years but at least for the 450cc class, right now signs point to yes.

Villopoto came to Press Day downplaying his scratchy voice but the reality is that he was a little bit under the weather. And James Stewart came in fit and trim with an aura of confidence that we haven't seen in him since probably 2009.

All of this being said Anaheim 1 lived up to its reputation of being unpredictable.

Justin Barcia was the fastest guy at Anaheim 1 judging by the stopwatch. He set the fastest time in qualifying (57.656 seconds) and in the second 450 heat of the night he passed Stewart and put down a 57.755 on his way to the win. When it really counted, in the main event, though, he started 15th on his way to fifth place. It was a great ride, all things considered, but it wasn't what he was hoping for.

Villopoto grabbed the early lead in the main event from Ken Roczen but he could never quite shake the rookie and on lap nine he lost the front end and went down on the exit of the turn that led in to the sand section which handed the lead back to Roczen. In the last couple of years, the majority of Villopoto's crashes have been like this. He steers with the rear wheel and in order to do that he needs the front wheel to really bite into the dirt. When he goes down it's usually because he never gets the front end to bite.

Roczen had spent the first part of the race trying to stay close to Villopoto while simultaneously trying to keep Chad Reed behind him. When Ryan Dungey caught Reed on lap seven, Reed lost touch with Roczen. Reed's defensive riding caused he and Dungey to fall into Stewart's grasp at the halfway point. Stewart started outside the top 10 and was on a tear. On laps 12 and 13 Stewart used the same turn that bit Villopoto to get by both Dungey and Reed. Then he set out after Roczen.

Over the next three laps, Stewart threw down the fastest laps of the entire race. In those three laps he cut Roczen's four-second lead to almost nothing and then on lap 16 Stewart tried the same move on Roczen that worked to get him by both Dungey and Reed. However, Roczen carried enough corner speed that Stewart couldn't make it work. Two straights later Stewart got alongside Roczen in the whoops but caught a whoop funny with his rear wheel and swapped out hard. Stewart picked up his bike, saw that the handlebar was pretzeled and walked back to the pits.

The two favourites crashed themselves out of what looked to be certain victories and the rookie – that's Roczen – proved to be the most collected of the bunch on his way to the first win of his 450 career, leading Dungey, Reed and Villopoto (and their combined six AMA 450 Supercross championships) to the chequered flag.

Roczen's performance was awe-inspiring but most of all it was complete. He used his head and put in a complete race with a great start and consistent laps to take the win even though he wasn't the fastest guy out there. Ultimately, most of the time it's the fastest guy that wins...



The last time a rookie won the season opener like Ken Roczen did at Anaheim was way back in 2003 and the rider was Chad Reed



KEN ROCZEN

CATCHING UP WITH THE ROOKIE WINNER

Red Bull KTM's Ken Roczen has actually gotten a podium finish in 450 Supercross before but not since Chad Reed's 450 debut in 2003 has a rookie come in and won round one. Ken Roczen just did. During the AMA Nationals he commented a few times that he thought the American fans didn't like him but they were very loud in support of him at Anaheim 1.

DBR: Do you still think the American fans don't like you? That sounded like a pretty solid cheer to me...

KR: "Yeah, I mean, they were amazing. And it just keeps growing, which is amazing for me. I love hanging out in the pits and it looks like they're all about me. I don't know, it gives me a very comfortable feeling."

DBR: Holding off Reedy for a while early in the race. How was that?

KR: "Yeah, I grabbed a decent start and sneaked around the inside and I was right behind Ryan [Villopoto]. I think there were parts on the track where he gained on me a little bit but I think on the other half of the track I gained on him so we kind of just kept it steady the whole way until he slipped and gave me the lead. My mind was just empty, honestly."

I just kept doing my thing because I know it's a long race. I don't know, time went by and then it was lap 10 and I'm like, 'Okay, halfway. Let's do this'.

"I kept going and then I heard James coming. I just tried to relax my body because I was holding on really tight but I could control it. If James hadn't have crashed – if he would have passed or something – I would have tried to give it back to him because I really wanted to win. I mean, he was flying out there. It's a bummer that he went down and I hope he didn't injure himself."

"When it was two laps to go I was like, 'Man, it's getting close' but it's for sure not done because two laps can be long. Lap times were pretty long, too, so it was definitely a long race. Then we went through the finish and did it. I still can't believe it. It's such a great feeling. I'm going to go back home and just enjoy the night; enjoy the moment."

DBR: You've actually podiumed in the 450 class before...

KR: "Yeah, it's true. That was different, though. A lot of guys were out. Just now, being really in this class and coming out with the win at the first race is such an amazing feeling. It's insane."

I'm blown away."

DBR: Do you feel a little bit like a different rider now? You've switched up your program this year a little bit and you're on a completely different bike...

KR: "No, I don't really feel like a different rider, to be honest. I just need to try to learn to use my legs a lot so I don't pump up. I mean, it's working great and I think I'm just getting better for here on."

DBR: Are you talking about gripping the bike with your knees?

KR: "Yeah, I need to grip with my legs more. Also, it's the first race and you just kind of forget about things. You're using your upper body and your arms a lot so I need to start to grip the bike with my legs and relax my upper body."

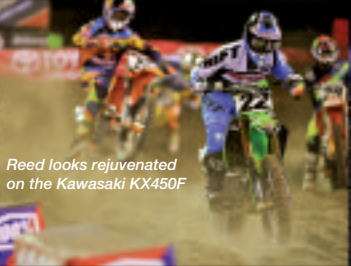
DBR: Some people thought you had a broken arm...

KR: "No, my arm is 100 per cent. There's no pain anymore. I mean, you guys were dang close. I mean, the first doctor told me it was broken – fractured. But I knew he was kind of talking smack because he was like, 'You can

Defending champ Ryan Villopoto crashes out of the lead in the main



Anaheim stadium is packed!



Reed looks rejuvenated on the Kawasaki KX450F



Ivan Tedesco crashes early and doesn't figure in the results



© ktmimages.com/Cudby S.

see it on one side but not on the other. Blah blah. We're just going to put you in a cast'. Already right there I was like, 'Hold on, buddy!' and he was like, 'Maybe you can't race' and I'm like, 'I'm definitely racing no matter what!' I then went back to California. Went to my Fox guy, went to his mom because she knows all about that stuff and she says it doesn't look like there's anything broken. Then I went to Dr. Alexander and I have a lot of trust and faith in him because he knows what he's doing. He took new X-rays and says, 'Dude, you're totally good' and a week later I went back on the bike."

DBR: And that was it? You had a week off the bike, basically?

KR: "That was it. The week actually hurt. I went back on the bike feeling like a beginner. Supercross is such a technical thing, like when you're off the bike, you just lose it..."

DBR: Is it just that sharpness?

KR: "Yeah, I think so. Also, I went on the test track and the track was just beat up. It was like an outdoor track. So it's kind of nice if you go back your first day to have it freshly shaped just to get back in the

rhythm and have a good day. So that didn't really work out."

DBR: Well, you won... Ryan Villopoto, who you train with, didn't. Your team-mate, Ryan Dungey, didn't. Do you expect them to change a little bit? Like not share as much with you at this point?

KR: "I don't know. I hope not, because I'm just giving advice, they're giving advice. I'm bummed that Ryan went down. We're all just giving our best out there. Of course on the track we're competitors but I think we have a life off the track. So I hope they're all cool."

DBR: Did you know when Stewart went down?
KR: "I heard the crowd go, 'Oooooohhhh!'"

DBR: Did you know he was right next to you.

KR: "Oh, I didn't notice that. I mean, I know he was right behind me but I didn't know he was like next to me."

DBR: He was neck-and-neck and started swapping out.

KR: "Yeah, bummer. I hope he's all right though..."

James Stewart blows by Ryan Dungey but fails to make the finish



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RYAN DUNGEY

TWO TICKS WITH THE RUNNER-UP

Red Bull KTM's Ryan Dungey was solid on his way to second place at Anaheim 1 but there wasn't much excitement in his riding or his demeanour but just like usual, he's in the hunt.

DBR: That was a solid race. What could you have done differently?

RD: "I wish I could have made that pass happen on Chad Reed earlier but it was hard because there weren't many different lines you could choose out there. You kind of had to run it in, so it could have been a little bit more aggressive there, but overall I really felt good tonight. Although it's a second, I was happy, and excited going forward. I think the performance was there. Everything was good. I held on tight, got arm pump, which is kind of normal for the first one. But it's good to get things rolling into the season."

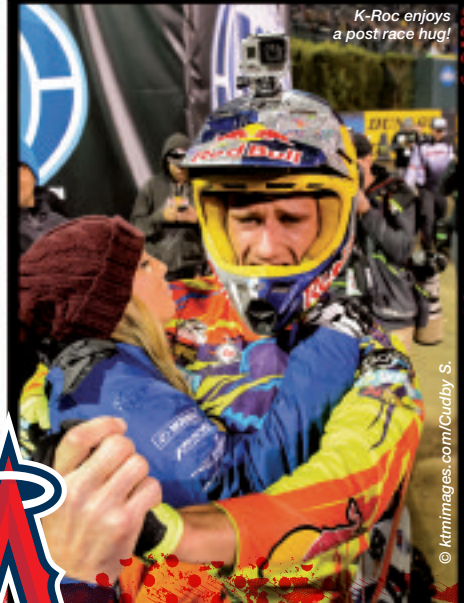
DBR: Can you talk a little bit about the battle with Reedy?

RD: "Yeah, I kind of sat behind Reed for a while. I maybe fell into his groove a little bit which is not good. I needed to make that pass happen quicker, and I did try. He covers his lines really good. He's smart in that area. So, once we were able to make the pass happen, late in the race... I think what James did when he passed me and Chad, it showed that he just got out and ride your own laps. And unfortunately he crashed but I needed to make that happen."

DBR: What about as far as settings from the test track at round one? Sometimes you learn a few extra things. Did you guys go through some stuff?

RD: "We made a few adjustments but for the first year I felt like we were in the ballpark with our suspension setup. I didn't feel like we were chasing it or nothing and I owe that to the guys on the team."

K-Roc enjoys a post race hug!



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JAMES STEWART

Bubba went down pretty hard in the main event and he was definitely pretty slow to get up but his team reports that his biggest injury is to his pride. He should be back and ready to go in Phoenix.

ELI TOMAC

Tomac was fast right away at Anaheim 1. He was second-fastest in the opening qualifying session but went the wrong way a bit on some settings and ended up qualifying eighth for the night show. But his night of racing lasted about 15 seconds as the rookie made a rookie mistake at the end of the track's first rhythm section after the start, cutting across the track over the last jump in traffic and gathering up Jake Weimer in a huge wreck. It knocked he and Weimer both out of the heat and Weimer had further bad luck chase him through the Semi to the LCQ where he finally qualified for the main. Tomac hurt his shoulder pretty bad in the crash but nothing's broken and he'll make a late decision for Phoenix.

KEN ROCZEN

It probably seems weird to include Roczen in this when he won the main event at Anaheim 1 but a couple of weeks before the race Roczen went down hard and the rumour was that he had broken his upper arm. As it turned out, his arm wasn't broken, although it was definitely hurt. He took it easy on his arm until round one and he's still not 100 per cent but he's obviously close enough.



Eli Tomac goes out on lap one of his heat after clashing with Jake Weimer

Bubba's crash in the whoops is downright nasty but he walks away unscathed



An arm injury can't slow Kenny

INJURY WATCH!

CATCHING UP WITH THE CRASHERS...

Dean Wilson is far from his best after a midweek training accident

SX EXPRESS

RIDES OF THE FAST
AND THE FAMOUS



© Frank Hoppen



Ryan Villopoto's Kawasaki KX450F



James Stewart's Suzuki RM-Z 450



Chad Reed's Kawasaki KX450F



Josh Grant's Yamaha YZ450F



Justin Barcia's Honda CRF450R



Ken Roczen's KTM SX-F 450



DEAN WILSON

Wilson went down the Wednesday before Anaheim 1 and hurt his elbow. He survived Anaheim but the hope is that he'll feel a lot better as the series goes on. He considers this his final chance at a 250cc supercross title before he plans to move to the 450cc class in 2015. Unfortunately, until his elbow feels a lot better he's going to have limited time on the bike during the weeks and with the way Anderson and Seely are riding they have the ability to put a lot of points on Dean before he gets back to 100 per cent.



Trey Canard misses the season opener

TREY CANARD

In early December, Trey Canard went down and broke his left forearm. He had surgery right away but it's not healing as fast as he and his doctors would like. As of now, he hopes to be back on the bike in early February and hopes to be back racing within a few weeks of that. According to people close to him he was going incredibly fast prior to the accident.

With an aggressive pass two corners from home Jason Anderson is a worthy winner



© Frank Hoppen



ANAHEIM LITES DELIGHT!

JASON ANDERSON MAKES IT A DOUBLE CELEBRATION FOR THE KTM CAMP BY SNATCHING A LAST-GASP WIN IN THE 250 DIVISION...

Traditionally 250 class teams always want to send their fastest healthy racers to Anaheim 1 simply because it's the biggest, baddest race of the year with the most exposure for them and their sponsors. Still, there were some clear favourites coming into round one, chief among them former AMA National Champ Dean Wilson. Typical for Deano, though, his bad-luck streak continued and the Wednesday before Anaheim 1 he had a hard get-off at the test track and hurt his elbow. Wilson was the fastest guy in qualifying but that's just a single lap and although he finished third in his heat race he didn't jump the finish-line double at the end of the race.

In the main event Jason Anderson grabbed the early lead with Cole Seely, Malcolm Stewart, Wilson and Zach Osborne hot on his heels. Seely took over the lead on lap four of 15 and put on a sprint but Anderson stuck right with him as they distanced themselves from the field. Wilson and Osborne went around Stewart and Osborne passed Wilson at least a half-dozen times only for Wilson to continually steal the spot right back. Wilson was putting up a good fight but ultimately it wasn't enough. He ended up losing the spot to Osborne for good

with two laps to go. Wilson hung on for fourth, rolled the finish and rode off in obvious pain.

Out front, Seely caught some lappers in the last couple of laps, and two turns before the finish Seely had to check up for some more lappers when Anderson threw his bike inside of Seely nearly causing them both to crash. The gamble worked though and Anderson hung on to win over the dejected Cole Seely.

Anderson and Seely were clearly heads and tails faster than the rest of the field at Anaheim 1 and if they continue to get starts, don't expect anyone – outside of Wilson and that's if he heals up – to challenge them for the title. That said Anderson was almost as surprised as anyone that he turned out to be the big winner on the night. Here's what he had to say on the night...

DBR: For a while when the white flag came out it looked like you had a solid ride for second...

JA: "It did! But when I went through the mechanics area before the white flag my mechanic wrote 'lappers'. I knew, me and him were kind of similar and we were kind of just chasing each other back and forth and we

would stretch it out and then bring it back in. But I knew that last lap with my sprint speed, I could catch him. I didn't want to go too crazy at A1 but it ended up crazy."

DBR: How difficult is that, when somebody goes by you, mentally, to be able to push yourself right back up to them, hang on, and then get by them?

JA: "It actually wasn't too tough for me tonight. Just following him, and just hitting my marks, being smooth behind him was actually easier than leading. This track was tough for me to lead, tonight. He got away but I knew if I sprinted up to him, I knew I could make a ballsy move kind of like I did. I did it. I didn't want to be dirty. I mean, I still completed my corner and everything. But it's A1 – it's a win. The pass stuck and I went over the finish and was stoked. I was real happy."

DBR: At one point, I thought you were going down, too.

JA: "Yeah, I did, too. When I went in, I wanted to pull out of it before I hit him so I knew I wasn't going to fall. But I hit him and I hadn't pulled out yet."



Malcolm Stewart fares better than his big brother but still finishes off the podium

Rookie Cooper Webb scores a solid fifth at Anaheim



An injured Dean Wilson has to be content with fourth



DBR: He almost went down, too. Going into that last turn, you went right to the outside. If he would have been just a touch closer he was going to take a shot back at you...

JA: "That's the thing. I didn't want to go too far inside and not hit the finish but I didn't know where the markers were because they said they changed the where the timing loop is. I went out and I knew I could hit the finish line and be ahead of him so it ended up working out. But it was close."

DBR: Compare this to your other win last year in Salt Lake City.

JA: "Salt Lake was emotional but this one is A1. I mean, I think this one possibly tops that especially because of all the hard work I've been putting in and kind of where I've come from in my pro career. I shouldn't say everything I've gone through but it's a struggle to be on top of the box, you know? Those guys are badasses out there and you've got to be on your game to beat 'em."

DBR: Well I know in your rookie season, mentally, you sort of lost it a little bit after your team-mate Ian Trettel got hurt and you were

a little touch-and-go about racing at all. What brought you around to now, where you're mentally strong and able to push for wins?

JA: "Well, basically, I want to ride dirt bikes. And if I'm going to ride dirt bikes I want to give it my all. And that's kind of where I was after everything. Like after that Supercross season I came into outdoors and I actually tried super hard my first year outdoors – I just wasn't in shape or whatever the deal was. But having dirt bikes as your job is a bad-ass deal and that's kind of what I wanted."

"I'm lucky this team stuck with me and gave me a bike to ride. I think our bikes have been good the last couple years but I think this KTM stepped up our game a lot. I rode KTMs in the past and I love the bike. I like the steel frame and the whole setup they have going. I mean, Kenny won the 450 main tonight and I won the 250 main — it shows how good the bike is."

DBR: In practice, you were the first guy out almost every time. Was that on purpose? Were you like, 'I don't want to wait around. I'm not messing around'?

JA: "I just like to get an open track to put your fast laps in. That's kind of my deal and I actually

did that a lot last year too so that's my deal for sure."

DBR: Do you feel like you let everyone know that you're in this for the title?

JA: "Oh, for sure! I think me and Cole kind of surprised a lot of people because there was Osborne and Wilson behind us but me and Cole were ripping. Like, that's the fastest I've seen him go and I know I was ripping because I was hitting my marks really good. And I wasn't catching him super gnarly or anything. I'm going to have to be on my game with that guy."

DBR: That's a big reason why he was so stunned on the podium because he knew he was on it...

JA: "Yeah, because I know if I get behind anyone I can ride exactly like them just because of all the work I've put in. I don't want to be cocky or anything but it would be a surprise for someone just to yank me and pull away from me. I mean, I may struggle in the front but if someone gets around me I'm going to hang on. And I know my fitness is where it needs to be and I'm not going to be tired on lap 15. So I'm in it and I want the championship this year."

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French REVOLUTION

HAS JORDI TIXIER GOT WHAT'S NEEDED TO
TAKE THE FIGHT FOR THE MX2 WORLD TITLE
TO HIS KTM TEAM-MATE JEFFREY HERLINGS?

Words and photos by **Redeye Media**

Some say that whoever finishes second is the first loser. And that might well be how it feels in defeat because when you're aiming to win, finishing second is always be going to be a bitter pill to swallow.

Coming off an EMX125 championship victory in 2010, Tixier's first year in GPs came in 2011 riding for Jacky Martens' JM Nestaan Racing team where he finished a credible 13th overall. Fifth in 2012 aboard the Red Bull Factory Bike set him up perfectly for his first real attempt at a world title in 2013. Realistically though it was unlikely that Jordi Tixier would be World MX2 Champion in 2013 and naturally all bets were placed firmly on the uber-talented Jeffrey Herlings. But although Herlings ultimately beat Tixier by 135 points the Frenchman certainly made him work for it.

We sat down with the racer who's most likely Jeffrey's biggest threat for the title in 2014 to find out more about the man behind the #911...

DBR: So how did the racing thing all begin?

JT: "I started riding at three years old. When my father was riding I'd follow him on my bike. I had my first race when I was six years old. I didn't want to do it but my father pushed me. I was crying before the race [laughs] and didn't make the second moto. I continued racing though and in 2003 I won my first title – the French championship and after this moment I couldn't stop riding."

DBR: What was your first bike?

JT: "It was a PW Yamaha, then I got a 65cc KTM and then an 85cc KTM. And yeah, I got my first title in 2003 in the French Championship with the 65cc then moved up to 85cc for the next year and finished second. After that it was pretty difficult to race because KTM didn't want to give me bikes for the 125cc French championship so I moved to Kawasaki."







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"I had a good deal with them and stayed there for two years but the bike wasn't good enough to win and I finished fifth and fourth. Then I got a good contract with Jacky Martens in 2010. I had a really good sponsors like SHOT race gear and they gave me great help and I went in the team for one year and I won everything with KTM – the French championship and the European championship where I won almost every moto. So it was a really great year for me."

"I stayed with Jacky Martens for my first year in MX2 and I finished 13th overall. After that I spoke with Pit Beirer and Stefan Everts and I had a really nice opportunity to go in the factory team and I signed for three years. It was just amazing for me, it was just a dream and in the first year I finished fifth in 2012 and last year I finished as vice world champion which was just amazing for me."

DBR: Was working together with Jacky very helpful?

JT: "It was a good year but it's not like now, you know? Jacky was almost never there for the training, it was just my mechanic and me and we didn't speak too much together. Now it's really different with the factory team – it's like a big family and I'm almost always with Stefan when I'm training and also at the races. We have a really good relationship together and things are much better now."

DBR: Do you think Stefan is one of the big factors in your success?

JT: "Sure, he has a really broad experience for GP racing. He's got 10 titles and when you ask him something he has an answer – a good answer as well. I really like asking him questions because he knows many things that nobody else knows."

DBR: And do you find that he's a tough guy as well rather than trying to make you feel comfortable?

JT: "No, he's not a tough guy. You have to push yourself because... yeah, until I was in a team, I never rode as much as I am now. Sometimes the track is really rough and we have to do two times 40 minute motos so I have to push and when I don't he's not happy. He told me you have to push yourself to move up to the next level and to beat Jeffrey. I like it, it's really tough for the body but that's what I wanna do."

DBR: I remember Jeremy van Horebeek said that Stefan says this 'next level' thing. So he says this to you too?

JT: "Yeah sure, he wants to get a world title with me because with Jeffrey it's completely different, Jeffrey just wants to do everything by himself while I want to have his help. I like it when he pushes me because when I am alone I can't push myself the same. You always >>>

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want to push to go on to the next level and it's also what I want to do to be world champion."

DBR: And are you doing everything you can possibly do to arrive at that next level on the physical side with training and everything else?

JT: "Sure, I do everything that I can do. I have a trainer now – Willy Linden who is Stefan Everts' old trainer. So, that's a big help for me although it was also a really tough winter and he pushed me to keep in contact with Stefan all the time but that's what I like because it means they know everything about me. I like to push my body over the limit."

DBR: Do you feel that Stefan believes you can be world champion?

JT: "He doesn't really tell me but I know he wants me to be world champion. That's why he works with me I think. It will be a really good moment if I win."

DBR: How does it feel with Jeffrey in the team?

JT: "It feels pretty good. 2012 was a bit different because Jeremy van Horebeek was in the team and I had a really good relationship with him. He was my best friend and we went everywhere together – riding and we trained together always. Then with Jeffrey I didn't speak so much but last year I was always with Jeffrey. We went to Spain for one month and we shared a car and did some crazy things together and now we have a good relationship. This year we are a strong team. I also go riding with him and he is the fastest guy in the world I think in MX2. For me it's a big help and he's also a good friend so I'm pretty happy he's my team-mate."

DBR: I remember in Sweden it seemed like you were working for him. Was that true?

JT: "Yeah, it was a pretty funny race. We spoke together and we were joking about that because he said 'hey, you have to finish second in the race otherwise I don't win the GP and my goal is win everything' and so when I got the second place he was just so happy and jumped in my arms after the race and it was a crazy moment for us."

DBR: How does it feel racing with Jeffrey in the sand – do you try and follow him?

JT: "That's exactly what I want to do. I know Jeffrey is the fastest guy in the sand. He is faster than anybody in the world. He's not normal, so I just try to follow him for some laps. Everybody saw in Valkenswaard he got a bad start and I got the holeshot and he didn't pass me. He stayed behind me 'til five minutes to go and it was a really great race for me in the sand. But I knew he was faster than me. He is faster than everybody and I just tried to follow him for some laps and if he passed me I tried to follow him."

DBR: And when he does pass you, do you see things that he's doing and see a different line?

JT: "Yeah, not especially a different line because I have the same line sometimes but he's just faster in the sand – everywhere. He is fastest in the braking bumps and in the big waves but he's a little bit faster everywhere."

DBR: And do you think that speed comes from the way you think or does it come purely from being more on the gas and later on the brakes?

JT: "I think for him it's different because he is born in the sand and he rides almost every week in the sand which is completely different to us. I didn't ride in sand before 2010. I always rode on hardpack and since 2010 I rode deeper sand. Especially this year I rode deeper sand in the winter and my speed's not so bad now. It will be a big step to be like him in the sand. We will see later."



DBR: Let's talk about motocross and how dangerous it can be. When you're riding motocross do you ever think about the danger or is it just the racing?

JT: "Everybody knows that motocross is dangerous but when we are behind the gate we don't think about that because otherwise you cannot go fast. And for me for sure, I know the danger but I don't think about crashing. Sometimes you have a really big crash and you have no injuries and sometimes you have a really small crash and you break a wrist or collarbone. Sure, it's dangerous but we have also some really good things like when you win and that's what I like. I like racing."

DBR: Let's talk about where you live. You live at the KTM MX2 workshop in Belgium. It's just this little room with a bed and a shower next to it...

JT: "Yeah, I have two rooms. One room with a TV and a sofa and I have a bedroom and next to that is the bathroom. It's pretty good. I feel pretty good there. I'm not always there though. In the winter I am there to ride in the sand but in the season it's like half and half – half in France and half in Belgium."

DBR: When you first arrived there, was it a strange thing to be suddenly living in what's almost a mechanic's workshop?

JT: "It was not strange. It was my choice because when I joined the team, I met with Stefan and he said I have a choice – I can take an apartment in the city or I can take this. I chose this because I thought if I am alone what can I do? My mechanic is there and I can speak with him and that's better. I feel pretty good about it and I'm really happy to be there."

DBR: Do you miss your family and what you're used to – the French culture, the food, and the people? How does it feel to be away?

JT: "Ah, it's a little bit different but the food is exactly the same in Belgium so this is not a problem. It's a little bit different in the beginning to be alone but I like it. For sure when I stay away for a long time my family and my girlfriend miss me but it's my job and I have to do it."

DBR: How did it feel when you first got to ride a factory KTM? Was it a big difference?

JT: "Yeah, it was a big step. Everything was so much better. The bike was better, the staff was better. Everything was better. Like I said before, KTM is like a big family and everybody respects everybody. Not all teams are like that. But I feel so good and in the beginning I was just so happy and I couldn't think 'I am in the team'. It was like a dream and I was like – 'wake up Jordi' but no, it was real and I'm happy."

DBR: What would you say is the biggest difference in the bike? Is it the suspension or is it the motor? Or both?

JT: "The engine. Here it's a big difference. On the suspension there is also a difference but it's not like the engine. The engine is just amazing."

DBR: How long are you contracted for at KTM?

JT: "I have one more year – I signed for three years at the end of 2011."

DBR: What kind of things do you do in your spare time? Do you read? Listen to music? Watch movies?

JT: "I really don't like to read. I like to spend some time with my friends and ride BMX. That's a really good hobby. I have a track next to my home."

DBR: What about music? Are you listening to some good music?

JT: "I like NRG and Ellie Goulding. That kind of thing is what I like."

DBR: You've been working hard all winter.

When you arrive on the gate at Qatar will you be a new and improved Jordi Tixier?

JT: "Sure, that's my goal for next year, to be closer to Jeffrey at every GP because sometimes he had a really big gap on us and I



want to close this gap and my goal is to beat him in some races. So winter will be really tough but it's what I like. I just want to push myself and when you win a GP you don't regret your winter training."

DBR: Aside from Jeffrey, who are the riders in MX2 that you respect?

JT: "There are many riders who are fast and I respect everybody in MX2 and MX1. I just want to beat everybody but it's not always easy because a lot of riders have the speed to win like Glenn Coldenhoff or Jose Butron and Christophe Charlier. For many riders it's possible to win but hopefully I can beat them and it will be pretty nice to have some fights with Jeffrey."

At the end of a championship – there can only be one winner. How much Tixier has to improve and how hard he has to work to beat Herlings is unknown but he works hard and he learns fast. Musquin stood in Roczen's way and Roczen stood in Herlings' way and maybe 2014's MX2 class will be a repeat of this year's Dutch domination. Let's face it, no one knows. And no one ever knows until it's truly over. If we did, it wouldn't be worth watching. Let the future unfold and may the best man win.



MATTERLEY MAYHEM!

WHEN BRAKING BUMPS ATTACK...

DBR: What are your memories of that crash at Matterley Basin?

JT: "They are really bad memories! Saturday was pretty good for me. I won the qualification race quite easily and I was pretty confident on the track. I got a good start but I was so tight on the bike. I was just thinking about winning the GP and that's why I made a big mistake. I hit that braking bump the lap before and knew it was really bad. The next lap I hit it a little bit faster and went over the bars and the bike was on my head. That was bad memory but I broke nothing on my body and was pretty lucky I think."

DBR: Can you remember thinking 'oh my god, this is gonna hurt!'?

JT: "Yeah, I remember but I didn't have time to think about how I'm gonna crash and if I'm gonna hurt myself or not. I just crashed and when I stood up I said f*ck, I have nothing broken. Lucky man! I couldn't breathe for 30 seconds but I was especially disappointed because I couldn't win the GP anymore."

DBR: When I sent you the photographs I asked 'do you really want to see it?' How did you feel?

JT: "I felt good because I knew everything was okay but when I saw the picture I thought 'f*ck!' The crash was really big and I'm lucky to have nothing broken. I'm happy you sent the picture because I really wanted to see what happened but it was a really bad crash."



DYNASTY!

A real chip off the old block, Kristian Whatley's clean sweep of British titles is somewhat reminiscent of JMB's riotous run in 1991...

Words and photos by **Jack Burnicle**

The outcome of the 2013 MX1 championships resulted in a hat-trick of titles for Kristian Whatley on Roy Emberson's YZ450F MBO Yamaha that can simply never be reprised, due to the demise of the British Masters series. So Whatley's achievements, at 24, will remain forever unique and unrivalled in the UK record books.

The British Masters was originally launched and personally funded 13 years ago by Ken Winstanley, son of the chairman of Wigan Rugby League club whose own son Matthew was a promising national motocross contender. Ken created a courageous platform, running his 'KWS' rounds across two days of racing involving schoolboys, AMCA amateurs and pro riders who all competed on the same track. He introduced several new venues to the national scene and as course commentator I enjoyed destinations like Newcastle in Northern Ireland, Donington Park and Leisure Lakes, near Southport, Lancashire. Ken also attracted impressive names like James Dobb, Joel Smets, Ben Townley and Brett Metcalfe to the party as guest artistes.

His series metamorphosed into the British Masters after affiliating with the AMCA. But the Red Bull Pro Nationals intervened and nicked Winstanley's novel format so Ken, struggling for entries this year, has finally decided to call time on a venture which radicalised UK motocross and represented the first of Kristian Whatley's three titles. Subsequently, of course, the young Hampshireman clinched the Red Bull crown and topped it off with the ACU's Maxxis national championship.

22 years ago, in 1991, a skinny French world champion similarly left his indelible mark on the record books by winning three major AMA titles. With the demise, two years afterwards, of the 500cc nationals Stateside, Jean-Michel Bayle's massive achievement remains beyond reach – a 250 supercross, 250 and 500cc triple that can never be repeated.

In a monster season lasting from early January to early October, Bayle took on 250 supercross from January 13th until June 22nd, interwoven with outdoor 250 nationals from March 3rd until August 4th! He then hit the 500 nationals a week later, completing a nine month marathon on October 13th.

'JMB' had already won 125, 250 and 500 national rounds, as well as several SX mains, within the first calendar month of his American pilgrimage but 1991 was something special. He took on US main men Damon 'Demon' Bradshaw (Yamaha), defending 500 champ Jeff Ward (Kawasaki) and principally his so-called team-mate at Honda, reigning 250 and supercross supremo Jeff Stanton.

Bayle and Stanton shared one of the most unequivocally acerbic, bitter relationships in motorsporting history. Jean-Michel coolly won eight supercross mains and mounted the podium 14 times, only missing out in Anaheim, Irving Texas, New Jersey and San Jose – all venues where he still scored good points. Bradshaw and a snarling Stanton were cast adrift as Bayle was booed every inch of the way by packed, partisan Yankee crowds!

Outdoors on his CR250 Honda the enigmatic Frenchman won races though never an overall – the closest he got was losing a tiebreaker to Stanton in Gainesville,

Florida. But the unflappable Frenchman never finished off the rostrum. Most famously he survived the single moto of the muddiest national round ever at Hangtown, California, finishing second to John Dowd while Stanton and Bradshaw drowned their motors in a virtual river that flooded across the track. JMB was clever like that!

The 500 nationals he calmly dominated. Having won the US Grand Prix at Glen Helen he took overall honours at Millville, Binghampton and at Budds Creek and never finished a round lower than second to beat double champion Jeff Ward to the crown by nine points.

Coincidentally, 1991 was also the year that Kristian Whatley's dad Jeremy won the British Open championship – forerunner of our Maxxis MX1 series. They are the only father-and-son combo to both win the UK's premier national motocross crown.

Whatley senior, a schoolboy champion with Team Green Kawasaki in 1979, started a long association with Graham Beamish (something of a Roy Emberson figure!) at Heron Suzuki. Fourth in the 1981 125 nationals behind Jonathan Wright, Paul Hunt and Roger Harvey he moved on to 250s in 1982 and placed third behind his perennial rival Dave Thorpe.

The following year Jem (also known as 'Buck' and 'Wimper'!) turned the tables on Thorpe and won the first of three straight 250 titles. He also, in 1984, finished third in the world and beat a disgruntled Thorpe to win the magnificent Patchquik Trophy, the biggest and most glamorous cup in British motocross, which his son claimed in 2013!

Jeremy's third 250 crown, in 1985, was won for Kawasaki in a dramatic

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Whatley on his way to the 1991 British Open title



By quaint coincidence, Whatley's 1991 crew chief was Ian Browne — father of 2013 MX2 British Champion Elliott Banks-Browne!



Bayle back in 1992...



Jem Whatley shares 1991 British championship joy with wife Karen, Kristian's mum!

showdown at Hawkstone Park with Dave Watson. Whatley's strange mixed season of 500GPs and 250 nationals (you'd have to ask the late Alec Wright!) was hampered by a broken wrist but he made a brave, premature return to tackle Shropshire's savage sand. Those races were a pair of brutal 40 minute plus two lap motos and a gleeful Whatley amazed everyone by lasting the distance to clinch title number three.

He then moved to the Italian Cagiva factory and bust his collarbone in the first British Open round – at Hawkstone Park! Jem came back to win a couple of 250 grands prix and finish fourth in the world before returning to the Suzuki fold for 1987 and claiming a fourth 250 title, beating Yamaha's highly rated new boy Rob Herring and also winning the Weston beach race – on the same sands where son Kristian dominated a groundbreaking Red Bull National round in 2013.

A broken leg suffered in a practice fall at Matchams Park screwed up 1988 after Jeremy had won the French GP opener and was challenging eventual champion John van den Berk for the 250 world crown. Second in the 1989 250 nationals – and again winner of the opening grand prix in Switzerland – he suffered a mediocre 1990 at Mitsui Yamaha with new spannerman Steve Dixon.

In 1991 Jem moved back to Kawasaki with John Osorio's private Action Workshop squad, based in Berkshire. A promising start saw him beat the factory bikes of Thorpe and Paul Malin in the opening British championship round at Canada Heights but his grand prix aspirations were thwarted by a nasty wrist injury in practice for the opener at Payerne in Switzerland. After missing half the GP season he finished third first time back in Italy and followed it up with a loudly hailed second to Georges Jobe at Hawkstone's British round. And back home

those factory Kawasakis, Herring's Honda and Kurt Nicoll's works KTM stood no chance as 'Buck' swept to a fifth national title and his only Open crown, proudly wrestling animated two year-old son Kristian on to the rostrum.

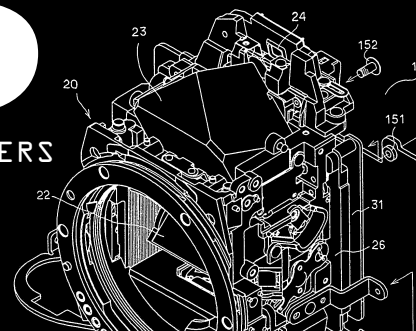
I first met the allegedly adult Whatley junior in the camper van of his training partner and pal, 2009 British Superbike champion Leon Camier. The genetic similarities in mannerisms, attitude and appearance to his old man were quite remarkable. It was like having the impish young Jeremy around all over again! Even their riding styles, love of traditional tracks and gift for creative lines are eerily alike. But boy, has he matured into a class act. In 2012 he typically refused to appear on stage at the Dirt Bike Show. Twelve months on, as triple British MX1 champion and having stabilised both his life and his career, he had no choice and did so several times, presenting endless trophies to star-struck kids with cheerful good humour!



PHOTO BOMB

A SELECTION OF THE WORLD'S BEST DIRT BIKE PHOTOGRAPHERS
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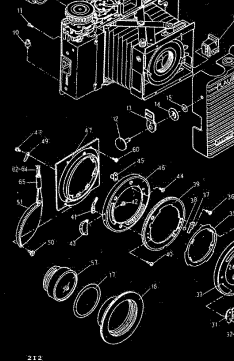
Photos by [Ray Archer](#), [Steve Cox](#), [Jonty Edmunds](#) and [Nuno Laranjeira](#)





Tommy Searle

Ray Archer: If you need a stellar job doing each and every time then there's only one man to ask and that's Ray Archer. The most technically proficient photographer in the sport is also the hardest working and so it's little wonder he's won the FIM Off-Road Photographer of the Year title more times than anybody else.



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Gantier Paulin



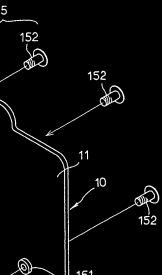
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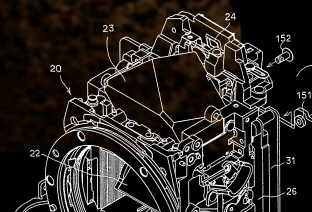
Jeffrey Herlings



MX1 start



Ken de Dycker





Ryan Villopoto



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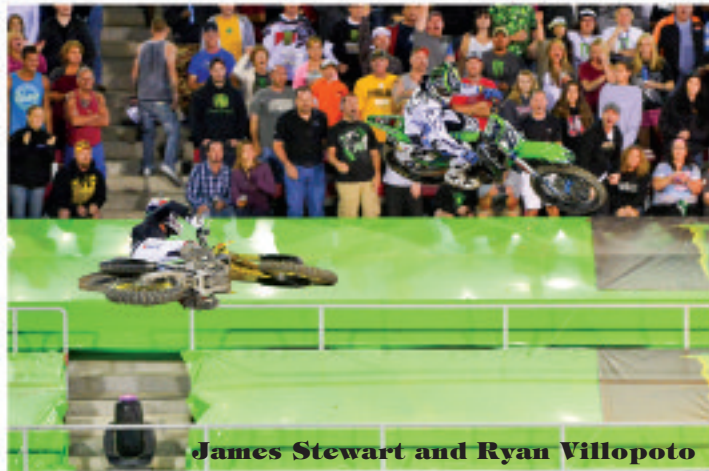
Eli Tomac

PHOTO BOY

Steve Cox: A self confessed word nerd, Steve Cox also takes a mean shot and is one of the few photographers to visit each and every event on the AMA tour.



Ryan Villopoto



James Stewart and Ryan Villopoto



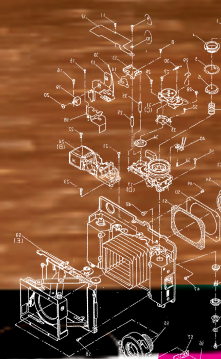
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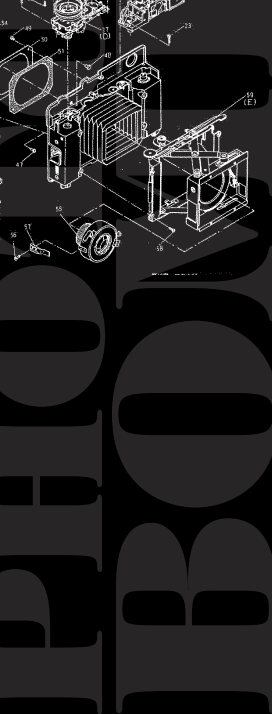


Antoine Meo

Jonty Edmunds: An out and out enduro fan, Jonty knows exactly where to go and find the best action at each event he visits. Technically brilliant and creative too it's little wonder Jonty's considered to be the sport's #1 photographer.







Graham Jarvis



Alex Salvini



Graham Jarvis

Matti Seistola



**Adam Sterry, Jordan Divall
and Mel Pocock**



Enduro fans

Nuno Laranjeira: Our Portuguese buddy tends to see things from a very different perspective to most people (maybe because he's so short) which gives his images an added edge.



Jo Mishoda



MX fans

FOR BOB

Sam Boyd Stadium, Las Vegas



Takahisa Fujinami



Jimmy Decotis





**Kristian Whatley and
Brad Anderson**



After missing out altogether in 2013 Marc Coma's looking to make an impression in this year's Dakar Rally



BACK TO BUSINESS

AFTER AN INJURY FORCED ABSENCE IN 2013 MARC COMA RETURNS TO THE DAKAR RALLY IN 2014...

Missing out on the 2013 Dakar Rally due to injury, Marc Coma makes a welcomed return to the race in 2014.

Now fully recovered from the shoulder injury that forced him to miss the last edition of the race, the Spaniard spearheads KTM's assault on the race this time around as they bid to claim their 13th consecutive race win.

As part of a four-man official orange army competing in South America, both Marc and KTM are well aware of the many challenges they face.

Firstly Marc's long-term teammate Cyril Despres is now his clear rival as he treads his own path with Yamaha. Secondly, they'll race the Dakar Rally on the all-new KTM 450 Rally – a bike that's been redesigned from the ground up.

Thirdly, the presence of HRC Honda in the

paddock certainly hasn't gone unnoticed. Winning the Rally of Morocco and backing that up with another victory in the Merzouga Rally they've become a much more experienced contender than what they were this time 12 months ago. And with close rival Paulo Gonçalves beating Coma to the FIM Cross Country Rallies World Championship – Marc knows both Gonçalves and HRC Honda are not to be underestimated.

But the Spaniard also knows that experience counts for a lot in a race as long and gruelling as the Dakar Rally. With three wins to his credit, Coma is one of the most experienced competitors entered in the race. And having been forced to miss last year's event due to injury, he's both eager and motivated to win this time around.

With the last of the autumn sun setting over his home in Spain, DBR sat down with Marc – one of Dakar's all-time greats – to chat about what it's going to take to secure win #4... >>>

Marc Coma

DBR: With Cyril away from KTM do you think people are more excited to see two champions fighting for the victory on separate machinery?
MC: "I think it will be a good thing for the race. It will draw extra interest and excitement to the battle. With Cyril moving to Yamaha it's added an extra manufacture into the mix and many will want to see if he can still be competitive and win. For me it doesn't change a whole lot, my goal was and always is to try and win. I think this year will be a very open race. Adding in Honda – who are very motivated to succeed – plus all the KTM riders will make it interesting for spectators."

DBR: In the past KTM had Cyril and yourself acting as their #1 riders, with two support rider in the team. How has that changed for 2014?
MC: "Basically we felt it was time that everyone had an equal chance of battling for the win so the 'water carrier' role has been eliminated. I think it's a good thing. Everybody can now race their own race and as a team we will be much more competitive. At the halfway stage in the rally we'll look at the classification and decide if team orders need to be introduced. Somebody may have had a problem and lost their chance to fight for the podium. If that's the case they will try to help the rest of us. But for now that is a long way off. When the race starts in January, everyone is equal."

DBR: For a race as long and demanding as the Dakar Rally, do you have any pre-conceived strategies?

MC: "I have an overall vision of how I want the race to go but it's become difficult to race to a strategy. Of course there are some difficult stages that you may not want to lead out but with the level of competition it's going to be difficult to think like that. There are at least six guys who can win. Trying to watch what they do all the time is impossible. I'll focus on myself and my riding and do all that I can to win."

DBR: There also seems to be a lot of young riders – in particular Sam Sunderland – coming through that may cause an upset stage victory. What do you think of young riders like Sam focusing on rally?

MC: "I think it's good for the sport. It's nice to see him decide to follow rally instead of motocross. He is very fast in the dunes and now he's gaining experience all of the time. He's learning the navigation and together with his speed he's making strong improvements. It's good to see a young rider like him on a team like HRC – I think that factory support will help him a lot. He's definitely a rider with a lot of potential and could have a strong future ahead of him."

DBR: Rewinding back to the Rally of Morocco 2012, can you explain the crash and extent of injuries that ultimately ruled you out of the 2013 Dakar Rally?

MC: "Speed is always high in rally and even though the particular section I was riding through was technical I was still easily doing 50mph. The crash itself wasn't very spectacular but it was the way I impacted the ground that did the damage. Immediately I knew I was hurt. My shoulder had dislocated but I thought it was something I could easily recover from. Unfortunately it wasn't until we did further tests that the extent of the injury was realised. I damaged the nerve that controls the deltoid muscle in my arm and it left me with very little movement. Recovering from that was the biggest hurdle I faced."

DBR: When did you realise that it wouldn't be possible to race in Dakar Rally 2013?

MC: "From the moment I crashed I always >>>



Unlike some of the competition Coma knows that his bike is capable of going the distance





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believed that I would be ready in time to race the Dakar Rally. Everyday I was doing everything I could to be ready. But the time scale was short and it was very much against me. I was trying to fix a four-month injury in two. Finally – with about two weeks to go before the race – I made the decision not to ride. It was only then I felt that I wouldn't be ready to take on the challenge of Dakar."

DBR: Did you find it a difficult situation to be in?

MC: "It was a tough time – not just for me but everybody close to me. The hardest part was being honest to yourself and making that initial decision to withdraw. After that it was a relief. I felt okay and knew that I had done my best to be fit. But time was against me and I couldn't have done anymore to be ready."

DBR: Most professional athletes tend to stay away from the races they're unfit to compete in but you decided to go. Why was that?

MC: "Everything was already in place for me to go before I announced that I couldn't race so

I decided to fly out to South America anyway. Initially I just wanted to be there to offer any help or support that I could to the team. But they had everything under control. I found it was difficult to be there but not be involved in the race as a rider. After a couple of days I returned home to further my recovery and just watched the race unfold on television."

DBR: The race itself was eventful with many riders suffering numerous problems. In hindsight do you think you might have won it?

MC: "[smiles] That's impossible to say. The Dakar Rally is so unpredictable – you just never know what might happen. It's best for me not to think like that."

DBR: Are you looking forward to returning to Dakar with a new bike?

MC: "I feel that we have made a good job this year in developing the new bike. I'm confident about it – quietly confident. But there is a lot of competition to watch out for. The other teams are growing stronger all of the time and we need to stay on top of our game to beat them."

Everyone has worked hard to reach this point and I'm very happy with the situation that we are in."

DBR: Since the Dakar Rally moved into South America we're getting to see a lot of high altitude stages. New for 2014 is Bolivia, how do you prepare for a stage that is 4,000 metres above sea level?

MC: "Altitude can be tricky. Since we've moved to South America it's something new that we've had to learn. And it's not easy to figure out. In January we cross the Andes in Argentina and then ride through Bolivia. Both of those are around 4,000 metres above sea level and both come on the second leg of the marathon stage so it's going to be tough. In the past I've trained a lot for these types of stages and each time we've raced at that height I've experienced it differently. The first year I felt ready for it but suffered really bad with sickness. My head was spinning. I felt nausea – you name it I got it all. The following year was the complete opposite. I felt fine – a little woozy but nothing major."





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DBR: Do you think it all depends on how you feel that day?

MC: "Yes, definitely. Obviously you need to be fit but once you attain that high fitness level a lot will depend on how your body is feeling. If you've had a pretty rough day beforehand then it's going to be a tough day in the saddle. But if your day has been good and you've got plenty of rest then everything should work out fine."

DBR: Is there any magic pill you can take for it?

MC: "[laughs] What Viagra?"

DBR: Yeah!

MC: "I've never tried it for rally – honestly! Actually, I think it might be an old wives' tale. I don't know if it's a myth or a miracle tablet for altitude sickness as I've yet to see signs of anyone using it!"

DBR: You just mentioned the marathon stages. How much of a factor will they play in the race?

MC: "Well, for a start there are two marathon stages, so that's double the trouble. We've got one in the Andes and the other in Bolivia – a country we've yet to visit in Dakar. The stage in Bolivia is very high and it's terrain that is unknown to everyone. It also comes directly after the rest day so it is bound to play be an important factor in the outcome of the race. Bolivia will be interesting for sure."



© Flavien Duhamel/Red Bull Content Pool



BACK TO BUSINESS

WIN, LOSE OR DRAW!

MARC COMA'S DAKAR RECORD...

2002 - DNF	2009 - 1st
2003 - 11th	2010 - 15th
2004 - DNF	2011 - 1st
2005 - 2nd	2012 - 2nd
2006 - 1st	2013 - injured
2007 - DNF	2014 - TBC
2008 - cancelled	

DBR: Over the years what have you learned to best prepare yourself for these marathon stages?

MC: "Personally, I think that they are all about finding a balance of speed, consistency and riding safe. You need to view them as one single day instead of two. Once it starts there is no real contact between the rider and his team. All you've got to rely on are the tools you carry on your bike. They are not the time to crash or suffer from mechanical problems. It's best to find a comfortable level of riding and stick to it."

DBR: Another factor that comes into play in marathon stages is tyre degradation. Does the high mileage worry you?

MC: "It doesn't really worry me but I am always conscious of it. The tyre must last two days – that's almost 1000 kilometres. I try to be smooth on the throttle and not to spin up the tyre unnecessarily. If you are too aggressive on

day one then you will wear it out for day two and be less competitive. There's a lot to think about during the marathon stages but I enjoy them – they keep the spirit of rally alive."

DBR: What about sleeping in a tent? Do you mind doing that during those stages?

MC: "No, I spent the majority of my rally life sleeping in tents. It's only lately that we have a motor home to sleep in. And while it's like five star accommodation in comparison to a tent it's still good to uphold the heritage of out sport and sleep under the stars for these stages."

DBR: Finally, as a three-time winner of the race, what will it take to clinch title #4 in January?

MC: "A perfect fortnight! We spend 14 days on a bike and everything has got to go right. I think this year consistency will be more crucial than ever. The level of competition is higher than we've seen in it in a number of years. Whoever wins this one will have earned it."

Jourrider!

WHY MOTOCROSS IS AN ESSENTIAL DISTRACTION
FOR MOTOGP STAR BRADLEY SMITH...

Words and photos by JP O'Connell





As we all know motocross is the absolute pinnacle of two-wheeled motorsport and there's nothing else out there to rival it for noise, excitement, close racing and danger. Okay, some would argue that speedway does or perhaps the TT but you know what I mean! Demanding the

peak of physical fitness, strength, endurance and timing it should come as no surprise that motocross plays an integral part in the training of several high profile riders from different two wheel disciplines one of which is Monster Tech 3 Yamaha's MotoGP star Bradley Smith.

Watching him pound out the laps at his private track it's obvious he's enjoying himself and that's evident from the whoops and hollers coming from him as he nails the doubles before pulling huge wheelies through the rollers. Okay he's not going to set the MXGP world on fire but he's quick enough to put the vast majority of us to shame and it's a safe bet that his motocross skills are far superior to your road race skills! But aside from it being a lot of fun there's another reason why he does it.

"Riding motocross is essential for me," explains Bradley "Firstly it's the fitness side of things because there is nothing harder for me than riding motocross – it's probably the only thing I do where after two minutes you can have arm pump and barely be able to stop the thing. Secondly it's throttle control because riding my 450 is like riding a MotoGP bike – you open the throttle and the thing tries to get away from you out of the corners, you clamber over it, you have to be smooth you can't ride it like a 125 or 250 where you hold it wide open and use the clutch. The 450 makes you think about what you're doing, think about your input, think about the power and that can be transferred directly to the MotoGP bike.

"Besides there is no way that I could stop riding motocross, I can go a period of time without riding and focus just on the road track and my MotoGP bike but riding motocross is my passion. Motocross is what gets my heart going and brings back that buzz of racing. It can also be a supplement for the weekends when we're not at a GP."

Having his own private track is vital for Smith as it means no distractions and no risk of spotting someone he knows and having to race them. It also allows Bradley to have a very regimented structured with his training.

"One thing I love about motocross is jumping and that's the one thing I miss the most from road racing – doing big tabletops or doubles. But when I go to the track I don't mess about too much. I will usually do timed motos that vary on what we're trying to achieve, I don't usually ride for more than an hour so maybe four fifteen minute motos or maybe a 30, 20 and a 10. These are all flat out to keep the heart rate up and we'll also keep the lap times up so I can keep focused. Motocross is difficult as the conditions are constantly changing but we try to keep lap times within one and a half seconds – that's the aim."

But motocross hasn't always been so serious for Brad. Introduced to the sport by his dad Allan an obsession with bikes began at an early age. "Basically I grew up with motocross bikes as my dad raced and then owned and ran a practice track. I started racing on Autos and then my sister Ashleigh and brother Cortnie started as well.

"From 2000 we raced as a family for about four years" recalls Bradley "We lived out of a motor home, finishing Sundays we'd shower, put our pyjamas on and jump into bed. Dad would drive us home and we'd be left to sleep in the motorhome before mum came and woke

us Monday morning, fed and dressed us and then sent us off to school!"

Picking up British 65cc Supercross titles in the early noughties Smith's success was mostly confined to the indoors as outdoor competition saw him as more a top six finisher in the BSMA, BYMX and KWS championships. While riding an 85cc small-wheel bike things finally started to come together and the '03 season saw Smith leading both the BSMA and KWS championships before a compound fracture suffered at Foxhill put a sudden stop to proceedings.

"Up until that point motocross was probably where I was heading," explains Smith "I was racing people like Ashley Greedy, Alan Keet, Tommy Searle, Steven Clarke and Alex Rockwell. I ended up having a big crash at Foxhill, sustained a compound fracture of my tib and fib and that was basically the start of my transition over to road racing."

With the injury coinciding with Smith's dad "falling out of love with motocross" it was decided that it was maybe worth looking elsewhere for their two-wheeled kicks. Having watched family friend Craig Polden make the move from motocross to road racing an idea was born.

"It's all Craig's fault, he had made the transition to road race and dad and I had gone to quite a few rounds to watch. It was something that quite took dad's fancy – it only took my fancy because it meant I could ride a scooter around the paddock! I was 12 years old and after being stuck in an external fixator for two months I was climbing the walls and I just wanted something to look forward to. Between Craig and dad they arranged a place for me at the Mick Boddice Try Out School where I rode at Darley Moor for the first time. From there a couple of the guys said they were going racing, dad was like, 'well Brad you can keep up with them so maybe we can go race too'.

With a borrowed bike loaded into the van it was time to hit the road race circuits where it was immediately apparent that while the speed may well be there, a visit from the style police was also in order.

"The first race I wore out all my toe sliders and footrests," laughs Brad. "I was riding the bike like a motocrosser, just dragging toe everywhere, going into corners like I was on my motocross bike, I even had my elbow up pushing the bike down into the corner."

With motocross still more enjoyable to the young Smith than road racing but with dad seeing more opportunity in road racing, an agreement was made that Bradley would ride both disciplines during '04 and see which bore more fruit come the end of the season. Not really having much success in either MX or on the road, a crash and broken arm suffered at Hawkstone Park was to prove pivotal in the decision making.

"Dad said 'we'll give it six months on the road bike, we'll go practicing, we'll go testing, we'll do everything it takes to make you better and if at the end of the six months you're still not quick enough then no problems at all'," explains Smith. "We gave it from June to October, travelling to France, racing four weekends from five at Cadwell Park and pretty much doing everything that I could to get better. I ended up going from an outside top 10 finisher to getting on the podium and winning my first race by the end of the year."

On the back of Smith finishing fourth in the National Aprilia Superteens series during '04, a call came offering a ride in the 2005 Spanish 125cc championship as part of the MotoGP Academy, a series in which Smith finished a remarkable second. Catching the eye of former 500cc GP winner Alberto Puig, Smith's dream of riding the GPs became a reality as the

Bradley Smith in the office — there are worse ways to make a living...

Bradley's equally at home in the dirt as he is on the race track





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Bradley stops for a chat with good mates Craig Polden and Adam Phillips



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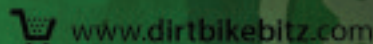
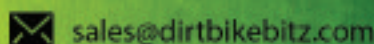
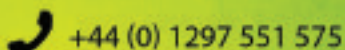
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Spaniard offered Bradley a deal to ride in his Repsol Honda 125cc GP team for '06. "I have to say that I really landed on my feet with that deal. I think that all of my planets were well and truly lined up that day."

Going from racing national races in '04 to a full 125cc GP season in '06 was something of a baptism of fire and things didn't go quite as smoothly as hoped for.

"After the first half of the season I was thinking that I was looking likely to be given the flick as I hadn't really performed as well as I should have but came back for the second half of the season and managed to up my game a bit. I got to ride at Donington and that was the first track that I actually knew. Suddenly I got my first point-scoring finish when I got 12th there. My confidence grew from there and I finished top Honda at Motegi in eighth. That seemed to change people's minds and they started thinking that maybe this English kid has got it after all. Come the end of the season I managed 19th and Rookie of the year."

The next four seasons would see a switch of brand to Aprilia and a steady rise through the 125cc ranks for Smith, the highlight being a stunning 2009 where the Oxford resident would steer his Bancaja Aspar Aprilia to second in the World Championship standings.

"2009 could have been my year but for a couple of small mistakes in the second half of the season, including going down while leading at Donington. I have to say that I was heartbroken, two mistakes on the bounce basically cost me the chance to battle for the championship. I looked at my options after that and decided to have one more crack in the 125's in '10 but unfortunately it just didn't work out to be what I expected it to be. I'm very proud of my silver medal but it certainly would have been nice to have finished with gold."

Signing off his 125cc career with a win at the final round in Valencia, Britain's most successful GP rider since Barry Sheene signed a two year deal with the Tech 3 Moto2 team amid high hopes and an awful lot of pressure to perform right off the bat.

"The first half of the 2011 season went amazingly. We got top 10s from the word go. I think I got a fourth in the rain in my second race and I got a run of three podiums and everything seemed to be going well. In the second half of the season we kind of stopped our development and we slipped back outside the top five and it got tough right the way through the 2012 season – just nothing went the way we wanted it to go.

"My expectations were still high and I knew the riders that were winning and while I knew that maybe I couldn't be world champion I certainly thought I could be top three in the world championship. At the end of the day the only person I was really riding against was Marc Marquez, he was the only person that I really believed was better than me and on my day I could still have something

In the zone...



© Monster Yamaha Tech 3



If you're not a fan of gross things then don't look at this picture...



© Monster Yamaha Tech 3

Dinky pain!

What can happen if you highside a *MotoGP* bike...

If your career choice involves riding motorcycles, be it on track or on dirt, then an unfortunate by-product will inevitably be injuries. While the mechanics of the crashes and injuries may differ the result will be the same...excruciating pain!

"Everyone had told me that highsiding a MotoGP bike was virtually impossible because of all of the electrics and rider aides, but in the Friday practice at Mugello I managed to find a way," laughs Brad "I didn't really go that high but it was the force with which I hit the ground.

"Basically it was a fourth gear, 100mph, downhill off-camber section and I should have known from my motocross days that downhill off-camber means be careful. It hooked up and spat me off onto my left shoulder and as I slid along my hand got trapped under the bike. By the time I'd realised that I needed to get my hand out it was too late, there was no way I was going to be able to lift a 150kg bike with one arm and basically my little finger got ground through the glove, through all of the protection, through the skin, the tendon and ground the bone as well."

As with motocross riders MotoGP pilots aren't going to let a little thing like a ruined finger spoil the party, so come race day it was onwards and upwards, albeit with a little help from his friends!

"Fortunately from my point of view I had damaged all of the nerve endings so there

really wasn't any feeling in the finger. Don't get me wrong, there was a lot of pain but nothing compared to how much it smarted a week later.

"For the race the medical team firstly put the finger in a splint but unfortunately that didn't work as I couldn't ride with it so they bandaged it as tightly and thinly as they could. I had my glove sewn together so my fourth and little finger were in the same hole but as I'd lost the extending tendon in my little finger I had to use a metal ruler to push the finger down into the glove – it was a case of close your eyes, clamp your teeth and wedge it on in there!

"I'd actually also broken my scaphoid in the same crash which hurt much more than the finger – the pinky just looked more horrific. Once the glove was on then it was on and wasn't coming off again, I had to have people on the grid just to do my helmet up for me but while it sounds really bad I was still able to qualify and race really strong and only two weeks later I had my first top six finish at Catalunya."

An operation to pin the bones together resulted in the radial nerve being pinched – a consequence of which was an electric shock feeling during braking at the Dutch TT.

"I had three weekends of riding with damage but once that was sorted, and after a small skin graft, I was all good by the time we raced at the Sachsenring. Looking now you'd never know it had happened – it's amazing what the body can cope with!"



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While not quite as potent as his 250+hp MotoGP machine Bradley still finds he has to respect the power of his YZ450F

for him. I really believed that second in the championship was obtainable so to finish ninth in 2012 really wasn't something that I expected."

Following the run of podium finishes in '11 Tech 3 offered up a three year deal – something unheard of in MotoGP – to include two years in the MotoGP class so despite the lower than expected finish in '12 Smith was all set to hit the big time for the 2013 season. Something not everyone was too pleased about.

"Yeah it didn't go down very well," smiles Smith. "It didn't go down well amongst certain riders, some sponsors and the team itself to a certain point – there were question marks and the journalists were always asking. I have to give all credit to the team manager Herve Poncharal who stuck to his word, stuck to the plan and was as diplomatic as he could be towards the project and the contract."

Of course when the chips are down it's best to pile them up again and under severe scrutiny Smith did just that, silencing any critics with a fantastic debut season that included thirteen top 10 finishes with sixth place at Catalunya, Germany and Australia being the highlights. When the fat lady sang at the final round in

Valencia, Smith ended the season in a highly impressive 10th position and, had it not been for the superhuman Marquez, would surely have been a shoo-in for another Rookie of the Season award.

"After putting all of that pressure on myself to do well it was heartbreaking to crash out at the first round in Qatar and that affected me for probably the next three races because you know that, basically, whatever happens you need to finish the race. At the summer break we kind of sat down and it was a case of 'okay Brad you're going to have to turn it up a bit now and start to squeeze every bit out of it that you can'. We started beating the Ducatis on a regular basis, we found a base setting that we were happy with and from there we started finishing in the top eight for the rest of the season which was obviously huge for us."

With 2014 set to be Brad's second full MotoGP season and with a brand new Yamaha to boot it's essential that the off season is spent as productively as possible. And that's why he'll be putting in the laps all winter as Brad's motocross roots prove massively useful in helping tame the 1000cc 250+hp fire breathing Yamahauler.



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THE ALL-ROUNDERS!

Celebrating the careers of the men who could win – or at least compete – in more than one racing discipline...

Words and photos by **Jack Burnicle**

Who would you rate as the greatest all-round motorcycle sportsman in the history of our sport? How would you define 'all-rounder'? There have been riders – still are – who can shift apparently effortlessly between their professional craft as road racers and the lure of dirt that often seems their first love. And a very exclusive list of super-heroes scaled the racing elite at grand prix level on both two and four wheels, which has to be a pretty extreme illustration of 'the all-rounder'.

This ability to diversify was easier in pre-war and the early post-war years, before the sport demanded much greater specialisation. That in no way diminishes the astonishing versatility of those superstars of a bygone era, though it does highlight the extraordinary prowess of more recent all-rounders. Check out how many current tarmac racers either started out life as motocrossers or still dabble enthusiastically in MX or trials. Sometimes surprising talents made a very real impact in a range of two-wheeled disciplines – and a few dirt stars successfully embraced three and four wheels. Let's take a look...

Having leapt a Suzuki into San Francisco Bay as a 14 year-old Travis Pastrana won the AMA 125 national motocross title and led the USA to victory in the MX des Nations in France in 2000 before becoming the world's greatest freestyler. He later turned his talents to cars and became American rally champion. The amiable Yank once even turned up at Weston Beach race and, having never sat on a quad in his life before, rode a 450cc Suzuki four-wheeler from 75th on lap one to second place behind British quad champ Paul Winrow in driving rain!

A completely contrasting character, Jeff Ward was a dourly determined little Glasgow-born Californian. The stocky 'Flying Freckle' claimed seven US national supercross and motocross crowns for Kawasaki between 1984 and 1990. He won 56 races and is the only rider ever to clean up every major AMA national title. Ward then turned to Indycar racing and was 'Rookie of the Year' in 1997 after placing third in his debut at Indianapolis. A career best sixth in the series standings in 1998, Jeff achieved four top five finishes in just seven starts at the Indianapolis 500 and won the Boomtown 500 at Texas Motor Speedway in 2002. Not done yet, Ward won the 2004 AMA Supermoto title – a feat he repeated in 2006 – and also twice won the X-Games supermoto championship, the second time aged 48 in 2008!

French star Stephane Peterhansel won two

enduro world titles before making his debut in the Paris-Dakar Rally in 1988. The most successful competitor in the rally's history, Peterhansel was victorious six times for Yamaha on two wheels between 1991 and 1998 then switched to cars, winning three times for Mitsubishi and achieving his 11th victory this year, driving an X-raid prepared Mini Countryman!

But the greatest all-round motorcycle sportsmen date back deep into the last century. Father of legendary commentator Murray Walker, Graham William Walker was born in Surrey in 1896. A world war one despatch rider, Walker finished second in the first ever Sidecar TT in 1923. Three years later he led Great Britain to victory in the ISDT on a 500cc Sunbeam and completed a hat-trick of ISDT victories in 1927 and '28. Meanwhile, he won the first ever race round the 14 mile Nurburgring road circuit in Germany in June 1927, on a Sunbeam, and was crowned European 500cc road racing champion that season! He also won the 1928 Ulster Grand Prix on a Rudge Ulster and in 1930 won again at the Nurburgring, rostrumed in the Junior and Senior TTs and was this time European 250 champion. Finally, in 1931, he achieved victory in the Lightweight TT and a year later won the ISDT for a fourth time at Merano, in Italy!

The annual Vic Brittain Trophy Trial is still held in honour of a man who led Great Britain to five International Six Day triumphs between 1933 and 1948. But Brittain also road raced, finishing fifth in the 1934 Senior TT. Allan Jeffries, born in 1905 and founder of a great Yorkshire racing dynasty, also has a national trial named after him as the first 'northerner' to be selected for the ISDT. Last man to win the Scott Trial on a Scott motorcycle, in 1932, he won 12 gold medals in the ISDT from 1928 (alongside Graham Walker), won the 1933 Lancs Grand National motocross and after the war finished twice second in the Clubman's TT. His son Nick, now 61 and still racing successfully on the roads, scored Honda's first ever world trials point on board the RL306 and won the Manx Two-Day Trial 10 days before road racing in the Manx Grand Prix! Nick rode 13 Scott Trials, 13 Scottish Six Day Trials and won both the 1983 Senior Manx GP and the 1991 Formula One TT, setting a production lap record.

G J 'Johnny' Draper first won the Motocross des Nations in 1950 at Skillingaryd in Sweden. The following year, after winning the Scottish Six Days Trial on a 350 BSA, Draper finished third in both the Senior and Junior Clubman's TTs, riding respectively Triumph and Norton! He won the Scott Trial in 1952 and the MX

des again, back in Sweden, in 1953, but his greatest triumph was beating mighty Swedes Nilsson and Lundin to claim the 1955 European Motocross Championship (precursor to the world series that started in 1957). Draper twice more won the MX des, both times at Namur, alongside his future brother-in-law Jeff Smith.

Double 500cc World Motocross Champion on a BSA in 1964 and 1965, Jeffrey Vincent Smith was born at Colne, Lancashire, in 1934. But during the 1950s Smith also enjoyed enormous success riding trials. Starting out on Nortons, Smith was British Trials champion in 1953 and '54. He also won the British Experts Trial and Scottish Six Days and eight ISDT gold medals. Meanwhile, between 1955 and 1967 the granite-jawed Jeff won an unequalled eight British Motocross championships and led Great Britain to seven MX des Nations and two 250cc Trophee des Nations titles.

A contemporary of Draper and Smith, modest Gloucestershire farmer Ron Langston bought his first Ariel in 1951 and from 1956 until 1960 was a works trials rider for the factory, winning the Cotswold Cup and special first class awards in the Scottish Six Days Trial. He was also no mean motocrosser, representing Great Britain in the 1958 Motocross des Nations at Knutstorp in Sweden where he, Draper and Dave Curtis finished second to the powerful hosts. Ron then tried road racing and finished fifth in the 1961 Senior TT but was already pursuing a new off-road career that would see him crowned British Sidecar Trials champion for five years – on an Ariel, of course!

Ulsterman Samuel Hamilton Miller lifted 11 British trials championships, two European championships, nine ISDT gold medals, six Scott Trials and five Scottish Six Days during the sixties and early seventies. But having started out riding trials as a kid Miller turned to road racing after contesting his first Scottish Six Days in 1954 – and won first time out! He attracted the interest of the German NSU factory, which sent him over a 250 for 1955. Sammy ended the year sixth in the 250cc world championship, improving to third on an Italian Mondial in 1957. He garnered a total of six grand prix podiums during his brief road racing adventure before returning to his first love, trials, where he swept all before him until 1964 on his famous 500 Ariel 'GOV 132' then signed for Bultaco and developed their two-stroke into a world-beater. In 1974 Honda hired Miller for three years to sort out their new four-stroke trials bike. He toured America where his exhibition displays in venues like Charlottesville Speedway stadium attracted up to 25,000 spectators and his trick of riding >>>



Vic Allan leading a Classic Bike
British Championship round



Gritty Glaswegian Jeff Ward



Flawless style from
Jean-Michel Bayle



JMB's maiden road race GP happened midway through his final year as a motocrosser



Ulsterman Sammy Miller (right) with pal Arthur Lampkin



Jeff Smith and his factory BSA



Vic Allan on his way to a British four-stroke title

over a Studebaker car laid the foundation of today's World Indoor Trials Championship!

Stocky little Scotsman Vic Allan MBE was a successful grand prix motocrosser for Greeves, BSA, Bultaco and CCM during the sixties and seventies. He rode 15 times for Great Britain in the des Nations and was British 250 and 500cc champion on the Spanish bike in 1974. The following year he won the inaugural British Open championship and in 1988, aged 43, came out of retirement and beat the kids to the first ever British Four-Stroke title on a KTM. 'Haggis' subsequently started road racing, achieved success in the Classic Bike British championship and on the Isle of Man and with his late brother Robbie won the 2004 UK Endurance championship.

Glum but talented Kim Ashkenazi won seven Australian motocross and supercross titles before venturing over to the USA and finishing third behind Kevin Windham in the 1996 125cc West Coast SX championship. Impressed, Honda America offered him a deal for 1997 but 'Ashcan', never an easy man to please, declined. "It was only worth 10 grand," he sneered! So the Aussie ended up on UK shores, where he not only became British

125 supercross champ at Sheffield but also sensationally won a British Supersport round for Kawasaki at Knockhill, in Scotland, during a season spent road racing!

Currently a front runner in the British Supersport championship, Northumbrian Graeme Gowland was once headed for a sparkling off-road career after winning the British Under-21 Motocross Championship at just 18 on a Yamaha in 2004. But he tried the Ron Haslam Road Race School at Donington Park in 2005, tackled his first tarmac outing a month later and in 2007, based at Calafat, near Barcelona, won the Spanish Supersport championship! And yes, he is still very fast on a motocross bike, as are fellow road racers like Chris Walker, Irish and English schoolboy MX champ Jonathan Rea and the infectiously enthusiastic former Australian Superbike Champion Josh Brookes. Josh lives during the British Superbike racing season with former MX GP winner Gordon Crockard and his hero is Ricky Johnson (he's built a 1988 CR250 Johnson replica back home in the suburbs of Sydney). Both he and Walker raced the Vets MX des at Farleigh and Chris has finished top 10 in the Weston Beach Race!

The first motorcycling superstar, Geoff Duke OBE was born in St Helens, Lancashire on March 29 1923. He sprang to road racing fame in 1950, his first grand prix season, finishing runner-up in both 350 and 500cc world championships on a Norton. In 1951 Duke claimed both world titles and was undefeated again in 1952 to claim his second 350 crown. He then signed for Gilera and swept to three successive 500cc world titles, only beaten three times in three seasons! 'The Duke' retired in 1959, aged 36, having secured six world titles, 33 wins and 50 podiums from 89 grand prix starts.

But that isn't the whole story. At Catterick Army Camp during the Second World War, Duke's instructors were Sergeants Hugh Viney and Bill Nicolson – both destined for greatness in the off-road world. He joined them in the White Helmets display team at Olympia in 1946 and '47. Employed by BSA, he won the 1947 West of England national trial and was second to Nicolson in the Scott. In 1948 he won the Northern Experts and was selected alongside Viney and Basil Hall to represent Great Britain in the second ever Motocross des Nations at Spa, in Belgium, where they finished second

Before becoming a road racing legend Geoff Duke was a handy trials, enduro and scrambles rider



to the host nation. 1952 and Duke tried his hand on four wheels and finished third, in an Aston Martin, behind Stirling Moss's Jaguar at Goodwood. Mercedes Benz offered him a drive for 1953 but Geoff had already signed for Gilera and politely refused. Second in the 1953 DK Mansell sidecar trial, he won an award for 'best rider usually solo'. Duke never did ride the ISDT but was instrumental in bringing it to the Isle of Man, where he still lives, in 1963, when he acted as clerk of the course. He also founded the Ramsey Club's Manx Two Day Trial.

I would rate 'The Duke' alongside the coolest, strangest cookie on the planet. Perhaps it was his date of birth – April 1 1969 – that set him apart. Born in Manosque, in southern France, Jean-Michel Bayle had his interest in motorcycles prompted by the local answer to Evel Knievel, one Alain Prieur, who had his take-off ramp transported to shows by the boy's parents, who ran a haulage company. So 'JMB' started riding, six hours a day out in the country and finally, in 1981, had his first race on an 80. Practice, he says, is everything. "I just ride like the other guys," he told me before the 1992 US 500 MX GP, on the verge of his outrageous move from motocross to grand prix road racing.

"Only more smooth, more relaxed and with more technique. That's maybe all!" Yes, but what about talent? "No," said Bayle, with that sweet, mocking smile. "The hard work makes the talent."

A brilliant freestyle rock-climber, Bayle simply believed that you can do anything. "If you want it and have a good time and you live only for this, then you can do it". So he did, inspired by the great Paris Bercy Supercross that launched in 1984, attracting America's best. Honda US motocross boss Roger De Coster, first saw Bayle in action during summer 1986 and persuaded the French Honda importer to sign him up. Bayle then finished third in his debut 125cc world championship campaign before winning an absolute thriller in 1988, the title decided at the final round, won by Bayle at Blargies, in France. A week later he led the French team to an heroic MX des Nations second place behind the Americans, again on home turf at Villars sous Escot, in front of 50,000 frenzied fans. He then dominated the 1989 250GP series, despite missing the first round with a broken arm.

With his angular shoulders, spare frame and splay-footed Charlie Chaplin walk, Bayle >>>

AND WHAT ABOUT...

David Knight?

Knighter is a gargantuan Manxman who as a teenaged trials prodigy won the British experts title, moved into motocross and enduro and won not only world enduro championships but also stole the Americans' precious Grand National Cross Country title. 'Knighter' has won British supermoto rounds, extreme enduros and the Weston Beach Race on two and four wheels in the same weekend!



David Knight has won at many different disciplines

Graham Jarvis?

Grimbo is the silent assassin – a quiet 38 year-old from Kent who was five times British trials champion, has won nine Scott trials (so far!) and four Scottish Six Days and finished top four in the world, winning five world rounds. Now, he is a massively popular figure on the continent and the King of extreme enduros having conquered every event on the calendar from the Roof of Africa, Italy's Hell's Gate, Ecuador and the Red Bull Romaniacs via Canada's Extinction, Wildwood Rock near Melbourne and Turkey's Sea to Sky to this years' Erzberg Rodeo in the Styrian Mountains of Austria.



Before becoming one of the world's greatest hard enduro riders Graham Jarvis was a top trials star

Stephane Chambon?

A minute Frenchman who stands scarcely five feet tall in his stacked trainers, was a supermoto superstar and regular winner of the Guidon d'Or in Paris who moved on to win the World Supersport championship with Alstare Suzuki in 1999.

was not the archetypal motocross star. And he could be prickly. 'If you said one wrong word to him he might not speak to you for a week,' reported De Coster, who became his boss and mentor in America after the stubborn Frenchman arrived early in 1990. First season, he broke his arm again when leading the 125 outdoor nationals but came home to a hero's welcome and was crowned 'King of Bercy' beating the Yanks at last. It was an omen. In 1991 he proved unstoppable. Bayle won the AMA 250 supercross title and 250 and 500cc outdoor nationals, accomplishing what no American ever managed by capturing all three major US national championships in one year. Back home, to rub it in, he was crowned King of Bercy again.

Then he decided to go road racing. Honda America weren't best pleased and insisted he stay put and see out his 1992 contract. He

made little effort – "I already do it so I don't feel I have to do it again" – though he did turn up, disdainfully late, for that US 500GP at Glen Helen, California and mulled the opposition after an afternoon's practice midweek without breaking sweat, despite a rear tyre puncture!

He was such a relaxed, classy rider that he had no need of gyms and ferocious physical fitness. His training was done on his motorcycle, as it had been since he was a boy. He easily beat the world's best road racers to win the Guidon d'Or supermoto in Paris but Bayle's mind was already on his first road race – the French 250GP on a Rothmans Honda. No-one had ever gone straight in at grand prix level. Motorcycle News, with that whimsy they so love, headlined Bayle's arrival 'Jean-Michel Snail'. Not for long, suckers.

He moved to Aprilia for 1993, got his first top 10 finish and followed it up with a brilliant 1994,

ending the year eighth overall against a host of world champions. 1995 he notched up his maiden pole position in Argentina and Yamaha hired the enigmatic Frenchman to contest 500GPs. His first year on the head searing 500 was awesome from the start. Sixth in his first premier class GP in Malaysia, he scored top fives, famously qualified on pole in Czechoslovakia and finished the year ninth overall. Further successes followed until he got hurt in 1998, though he did return to win the famous 24 hour world endurance races at the Bol d'Or and Le Mans in 2002. By then he'd proved his point to the world, so typically the world's most remarkable modern all-round motorcycle racer stopped when it suited him. We should be grateful he deigned to turn out at the Vets MX des in 2013, immaculate off-road style intact at 44!



Lego helmets were all the rage back then...



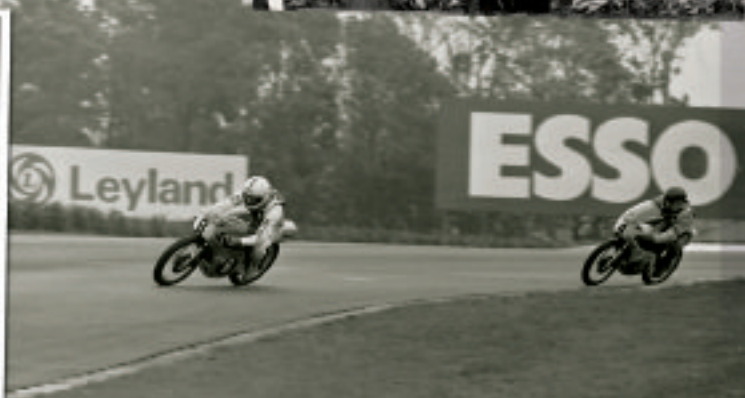
Trials star Mick Andrews gives it beans in the enduro event



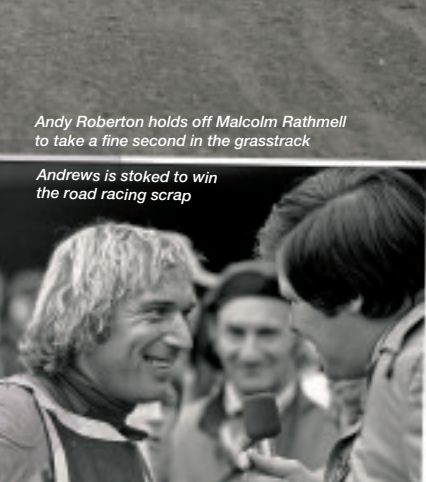
Rocket Ron Haslam cleans a tough trials section



Andy Robertson holds off Malcolm Rathmell to take a fine second in the grass track



Rathmell leads Andrews but Mick makes a pass stick before the finish



Bryan Wade pushes his kart to its limit





Andy Robertson takes victory in the trial



Rathmell rockets around a turn on his way to the Superbike Six title



Bryan Wade settles into his kart



Rathmell squeezes by Martin Lampkin in the motocross event



A smart ride in the enduro segment gives Rastus the overall win

THE SUPERBIKE SIX

A spectacular line up of '70s stars battle it out in six different disciplines...

Held on an overcast weekend in October, 1978, the 'Superbike Six' remains the best attempt ever to discover motorcycling's top all-rounder. It featured a sumptuous line-up of stars from across the sport. Every ace had to miss his own discipline and contest all the others and none proved more frightening to the inexperienced than Friday evening at Wolverhampton Speedway where original stunt superstar Eddie Kidd crashed out of the weekend's proceedings. A thrilling final saw grasstracker Chris Baybutt grab a late win and six-time British MX champion Bryan 'Wild' Wade snatch second by inches from duelling world trials stars Martin Lampkin and Malcolm Rathmell.

Saturday morning at Donington Park and former British motocross champ Andy Robertson won the trial from TT legend Mick Grant, future world speedway champion Michael Lee (son of Elsworth Moto Parc owner and former international motocrosser Andy Lee) and 1976 world speedway champ Peter Collins, with Wade fifth.

Another world speedway king – six times over! – Kiwi Ivan Mauger injured his knee during the grasstrack event as Wade lashed to victory ahead of Robertson, Rathmell and former European trials champ Mick Andrews, an ex-Matchless and Ossa works motocrosser. What was truly impressive was the speed and style of riders out of their natural comfort zone.

The motocross, with everybody mounted on YZ250 Yamahas, constituted three motos of 15 minutes plus two laps and turned into a monumental battle between Lampkin and Rathmell, the Yorkshire duo who were separated by only a single point at the end of the first ever world trials series in 1975. Andrews also got involved and in a storming finish Rathmell, a brilliant factory Greeves motocrosser as a lad, literally elbowed aside an unhappy Lampkin to nail overall honours, with road racer Ron Haslam's fighting fifth place assuring the 'Rocket' of sixth overall behind Lee and Collins. And that was it for Saturday. Everyone took a well-earned rest except Collins who was racing for Belle Vue speedway that night. 'How was it, Peter?' I enquired innocently on the pit wall next morning. 'Like sitting in an armchair' he grinned.

Early mist delayed the go-kart racing before Collins absolutely lit up Donington Park with an awesome display of exuberant driving as he thrashed round sideways among the road racing boys, eventually nailing third place behind multiple tarmac champions Roger Marshall and Phil Read and ahead of Grant and grasstracker Don Godden.

Next came one of the highlights of the day, the road racing, with all contestants mounted on 125 Hondas. Neck and neck and swapping the lead five times over the eight lap race, Andrews and Rathmell

howled across the line together, Derbyshireman Andrews nicking the verdict by half a bike's length and both men lapping within a second of the 125 circuit record! Baybutt finished third and Wade fourth after Collins had fallen at Redgate.

So consistent Wade carried a six-point advantage into the final five-lap enduro on a course laid out by ISDT teamster Mick Bowers. With everyone mounted on Kawasakis and a £5000 first prize up for grabs the spectacular Wade – a public schoolboy from Barnard Castle in County Durham – went off fast and crashed on his second lap, just scraping through within the time limit before a brief interval in which Rathmell had to change his rear wheel to rectify a sticking back brake!

The final three-lap crunch involved riders changing an air filter after one lap, completing an acceleration and braking test after two and encountering a special test on lap three. All the favourites got through unscathed except the unfortunate Wade, who flew over the bars when he hit a ditch. It proved pivotal and poor Bryan dropped to second place in the final results table behind the winner, current MRS Sherco supreme Malcolm 'Rastus' Rathmell who pocketed a cool five grand. Robertson placed third ahead of a tie between Lampkin and Andrews with Grant sixth. Exhilarating stuff, and time for a repeat performance!

SECOND HELPINGS!

AFTER A STELLAR DEBUT YEAR THE ARENACROSS UK TOUR IS ABOUT TO EXPLODE BACK INTO ACTION BUT JUST WHAT KIND OF RAZZMATAZZ CAN WE EXPECT TO SEE IN 2014?

Words by Jeff Perrett Photos by Suttly

Arenacross has really been a shot in the arm for the UK off road motorcycling scene and if you went to any of the four rounds in 2013 I have no doubt you'll agree with me. If you didn't then you really should go and check it out and see for yourself.

There's not really any doubt that when the Americans started taking motocross into stadiums back in the early 1970s and branded it as 'supercross' that it helped mould and grow the entire motocross scene in America. Call it radio motocross if you will, in that it poked the American masses and drew people in. I don't know just how many people got into riding off road motorcycles after seeing supercross — either live or on TV — nor does anyone else but what I do know is that it's definitely inspired people to want to ride or follow our sport.

Of course, that's America though, the land of the free with vast areas of land to ride a dirt bike on — a very different place to the UK. We've

got less land and we're much more against the establishment here in Blighty — and that's why taking our sport to the bright lights and big city is such a commendable thing.

It's not a new concept or anything that hasn't happened before here in the UK, most of us know that, but now something has changed. Now it's a real show for the general public — not just motorcycles riding around inside a stadium for the purist. Like or loathe Matt Bates (Managing Director of E22 Sports and promoter of Arenacross UK) you have to give him immense credit in revitalising this huge opportunity for our sport.

By rebranding it from Supercross to Arenacross and with tireless effort from him and his team you can already sense that it's all going somewhere good and it's a vehicle we should all jump on board for the journey to a better world. To really emphasise the point Honda UK have just got involved with the Arenacross series and will be giving

away a CR125F to the public at each of the seven rounds, as well as another you can win through www.arenacrossuk.com and on top of that the winner of pro series will be driving away a Honda CR-V for the year. Now, I can't remember the last time, if any, that a manufacture got that involved with an off road motorcycle championship in the UK. It speaks volumes really. Monster Energy are also backing the series once again as an official partner, as they see the value of taking our sport to the masses — hardly surprising really with their continued backing of AMA Supercross.

So, with everything in place for seven thrilling, bar-banging rounds from when the series bursts into life at Belfast's Odyssey Arena on January 17 through to the final round at Wembley Arena it has every chance of breaking down some of the barriers that have blocked British off road motorcycling moving forward. Not a bad return at all for the price of a warm seat, a few hot dogs and a cold beer.

CONTENDERS READY!

WHO TO WATCH OUT FOR...

DAVE THORPE HONDA

#1 ADAM CHATFIELD

#60 BRAD ANDERSON

Defending champ Adam Chatfield lines up alongside Brad Anderson in the Dave Thorpe Honda Off Road Centre team as he bids to retake the #1 plate. Rumours are rife that the champ is carrying a shoulder injury into the series and whether that hampers his run at the title remains to be seen. With limited indoor experience and his winter training focussed on tuning his outdoor skills Anderson is unlikely to challenge for the title but should pop up on the podium once or twice before the championship is over.

PUTOLINE APICO HONDA

#2 NEVILLE BRADSHAW

#153 JAMES HARRISON

Putoline Apico Honda bring wily veteran Nev Bradshaw and young gun James Harrison together for their attack on the title. After finishing as runner-up in last year's championship Bradshaw is looking to go one better in 2014 and after a winter spent training will be more than up for the task. Harrison won last year's Rookies championship in fine form and will be looking to ruffle a few feathers in his full-on Pro class debut. Expect to see both these guys on the podium throughout the championship.

OAKLEAF KAWASAKI

#3 JACK BRUNELL

#61 TYLER VILLOPOTO

Oakleaf Kawasaki could have their hands full with this pair who are both well known for their wild riding antics. Jack Brunell had a serious shot at taking the 2013 title and if it weren't for crashes while leading in London and Liverpool would have sealed the deal. Tyler Villopoto meanwhile has proven speed but how he'll get on in the super tight UK arenas is yet to be seen. While I wouldn't be surprised if this pair went 1-2 through the whole championship I wouldn't be too surprised if they failed to finish each race either.

MBO SPORT YAMAHA

#227 KRISTIAN WHATLEY

#65 DANIEL MCCOY

With plenty of supercross experience in his native Australia and the USA, Daniel McCoy could well be a threat to take the title and armed with one of Roy Emberson's Yamahas definitely has the right tools to get the job done. As the dominant force on the outdoor scene in 2013 there's no point in questioning Kristian Whatley's skills when it comes to riding a dirt bike fast but will that effortless style translate to the tight indoor tracks? Time will tell on that one...

BUILDBASE HONDA

#44 ELLIOTT BANKS-BROWNE

#941 ANGELO PELLEGRINI

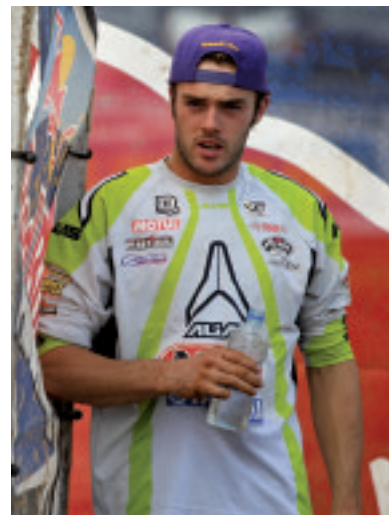
Former European SX champ Angelo Pellegrini teams up with two-time British MX2 champion Elliott Banks-Browne at Buildbase Honda. Both will definitely be solid contenders and should easily run inside the top five week in and week out.

DYER & BUTLER KTM

#511 STEVEN CLARKE

#25 JAMIE LAW

With solid AMA and UK SX experience Steven Clarke has to be considered a serious threat to take the title for the Dyer & Butler KTM team. Unlucky to be sidelined from the 2013 championship, Clarke will be looking to make amends and show the UK fans what he's really capable of. Jamie Law isn't as likely to challenge for the title but the fiery Cumbrian will be in the mix and after a long tough winter spent raising his fitness is in top physical condition.



CHATTERBOX!

WHAT THOSE IN THE KNOW THINK ABOUT ARENACROSS...

KRISTIAN WHATLEY – MAXXIS BRITISH, PRO NATIONALS AND MASTERS MX1 CHAMPION

"It's not something I've done much but it's something I'm going to have to start training for because it's definitely getting bigger and something worth doing now. Before a lot of us haven't bothered to do it because of the risk of injury before the outdoor championships start but now the Arenacross has so much publicity, better organisation, bigger crowds and more prize money it's definitely a series that's a good one to win. With the weather we seem to get in the UK in the winter now it also makes sense to race indoors, the problem is finding somewhere to train for it. I think it's a good thing though, especially for our younger British riders, it will help bring them on too."

TOM HOBBS – HONDA UK COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER

"Honda (UK) is excited to become an official partner of Arenacross UK, a series we have supported with a strong racing effort in recent years. Both we and e22 Sports, the promoters of Arenacross, hold a shared goal – to bring the sport of motocross to a new and enthusiastic audience and a new generation of riders. Off-road is a big growth area for Honda and with exciting championships such as Arenacross growing in popularity too, the future of off-road in the UK certainly looks bright."

SHAUN ANTHONY – OAKLEAF KAWASAKI TEAM MANAGER

"It's a no brainer for us to be involved with what e22 are doing and the direction they are going with Arenacross. We're now the official Kawasaki Motor UK MX1 team and it's important for Kawasaki that they are involved and represented well. It's accessible for everyone, in particular our sponsors who can come along and have a great night and be entertained in a different way than at an outdoor motocross race. I think for the progression of our sport and to get more people into outdoor motocross and off road riding then Arenacross is the most important series and one all riders, teams and fans should support."



Carl Nunn and Neville Bradshaw will be back battling it out in 2014



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MRS

LPE APICO KAWASAKI

#20 GREGORY ARANDA

#871 FABIEN IZOIRD

Are you ready for the French invasion? Steve James and the LPE Apico Kawasaki team are as they've armed the two supercross specialists with fire breathing 450s for the full tour. Fabien Izoird is the current French indoor champion while Gregory Aranda is no slouch either and is one of the few Europeans able to threaten the Yanks at Bercy each year. Expect fireworks from these two both on and off the track!

SJR KAWASAKI

#32 RYAN VOASE

#411 ERKI KAHRO

Not content with just running Aranda and Izoird, Steve James will also be pairing up grizzly veteran Ryan Voase and young Estonian Erki Kahro who some of you may remember spent some time with MVR-D Honda earlier in his career.

SHOCKTECH KAWASAKI

#133 ASHLEY GREEDY

#303 JAKE MILLWARD

Head-to-head headcase Ashley Greedy and young up n' comer Jake Millward will be looking to do Ryan Mason proud as they represent Shocktech Kawasaki throughout the championship. Greedy is a potential champion although he'll more likely make his mark in the one-on-one races where he's well known for taking out his competition. Millward meanwhile should make a main or two in his rookie year in the pro ranks.

MVR-D LANES HONDA

#21 JASON DOUGAN

#17 ALFIE SMITH

2014 is gonna be an exciting year for Jason Dougan as he returns to the MX2 division outdoors but before that he'll be looking to stir things up indoors on the MVR-D Lanes Honda. A bit of an unknown when it comes to Arenacross, Doogs is super fit and has epic bike skills so should get dialled into the indoor way of doing things real quick. Alfie Smith will also be looking for some strong results and should make most main events.



The LPE Kawasaki team bikes are ready for battle

Expect explosively close action out on the track



Cyrille Coulon is repping for the SR75 World Team in 2014

SR75 WT MOLSON

#5 CYRILLE COULON

#23 CARL NUNN

Reigning team champions the SR75 World Team Powered by Molson are back in 2014 with fast Frenchie Cyrille Coulon and enigmatic East Anglian Carl Nunn who's a multi-time British indoor and outdoor champion. Team boss Geoff Walker will be looking for a string of top fives from the pairing which they're fully capable of. One interesting fact about this team is that Coulon will ride a Suzuki while Nunn lines up on a KTM.

PENDRICH KAWASAKI

#114 JORDAN BOOKER

#121 BRYAN MACKENZIE

Fresh from a training/testing trip to the States Arenacross newbies Jordan Booker and Bryan MacKenzie are a bit of an unknown quantity although with full Pro Circuit support will be armed with the very best equipment for the job. We'll be watching this pair very closely at the season opener as they could well be the dark horses of the series if they did their homework in America.



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Matt Bates is the man who brings Arenacross to the masses

DREAMING THE IMPOSSIBLE DREAM?

TOUR PROMOTER MATT BATES TALKS ABOUT THE FINER DETAILS OF 'PUTTING ON A SHOW' AND THE FUTURE OF ARENACROSS IN THE UK...

DBR: There are seven rounds this year. Is that due to demand or are you creating demand?

MB: "I think it's a bit of both really where last year pretty much all of the events sold out so not being shy of taking a risk I thought 'what the hell, let's book up a few more arenas and make this thing bigger'. The reality is though that we spent a considerable amount of energy finding out exactly who went to the events and it shocked me to realise that only 10 per cent of people travelled more than 20 miles and only 40 per cent of the audience were from a motocross or bike background – you're probably thinking I'm a numbers nerd now! What this told me was that as long as we don't run two events on top of each other in close-by cities, they stand just as good a chance as the next to be successful."

DBR: Just how much work goes into getting the tour organised? There must be loads of red tape to cut through?

MB: "Even though we've been running events for a very long time now it still surprises us all just how much time goes in to the tour – and despite the best planning available we'll all still be busting our backsides with a few days to go. There's a team of around five people that work for a good nine months of the year on Arenacross ranging from marketing, planning, production and sales... and my job is to oversee all of this although I have to be honest and say that I love the promoting and I'm not a big fan of the production stuff. The red tape can get you down sometimes, especially when those famous words 'health and safety' are used but my right-hand-men Steve Price and Roy Barton are brilliant at managing this as invariably if Roy can't baffle them with his knowledge, Steve ties them in knots!"

DBR: What kind of promotion have you been doing?

MB: "An untold amount or certainly a large enough amount that often goes unseen in the world of motocross. Just recently we've taken the FMX ramps in to each of the cities we're visiting and created shows to promote the events as well as gaining a huge amount of local media coverage. Our PR girl Anne has been working flat out recently

trying to get the sport in the mainstream media – and you may have seen recently a full page article in the Daily Mirror with Kristian Whatley teaching a journalist how to ride indoors at Wheeldon Farm. As much as that really isn't direct promotion to Arenacross it does introduce people to riding dirt bikes and I love that I've had something to do with that.

"I'm also a bit of a traditional promoter where I have to see or touch what I'm spending money on. Don't get me wrong, social media is important but do people really buy tickets to an event that pops up on Facebook? I like to invest in promotions such as taxis in cities, billboards on streets, leaflets, radio, TV advertising and not to mention the bike media. The list goes on and on but is carefully put together to make sure we hit the right people at the right time – young families and sports enthusiasts on payday!"

DBR: What improvements to Arenacross can the public expect for 2014?

MB: "We've got something really great happening at the LG Arena in Birmingham on January 25 where we're creating a huge Monster supported Pit Party in the indoor Pavillion next to the Arena. This will open up at 3pm where people can come in and meet riders during autograph sessions, meet Tommy Searle and a few of the other Monster Athletes as well as shop, drink and listen to our very own DJ BBQ – Christian Stevenson – bang out some sounds. Edgar Torronteras is also at every round this year and he's without doubt a one-man show – I just sit there all night panicking that he's going to swear on the mic – we need to teach him a few new words! We've invested heavily in the sound and lighting production so can't wait to see how that all turns out!"

DBR: Do you see AX as being equally important to the Pro Nationals that you also run and promote... or maybe even more important?

MB: "They are both as important as each other but in two very different ways and the reality is they compliment each other really well too. I really am a firm believer that the Pro Nationals have done a lot for British Motocross, not just from the stance of image but how they've made other championships

step up to the mark while benefiting and developing a huge amount of young talent that we can all feel proud of in the future.

"My fear at the moment is there seems to be a lot of self-proclaimed organisers out there that have all of a sudden popped up having never staged an event – and surprise surprise they're going to be the saviour of motocross at the highest level. I even had a conversation with one of these new organisers whose reason for starting his series was because there weren't enough pro races to keep the pro riders earning money! Surely that should have told him something?"

"Anyone that states they're going to charge £5 per spectator, pay great prize money, run safe events while making the numbers stack up is clearly deluded in my opinion and disrespectful to the current group of organisers that are doing the job well. I wouldn't mind if a respected organiser stepped up and said 'right, I've got an idea, I'm going to do it this way' – I'd be full of support, worried for the right reasons, step up my game and get my head down – but these deluded individuals think they're fixing the sport whereas in fact they're doing irreparable damage!"

DBR: How has the industry reacted to AX?

MB: "The industry has been great as I can't recall one negative conversation or comment. I'm well aware though that times are hard right now for everyone from the race track trader to the bike importers – in fact, I know who's probably earning more cash – so asking them for too much support just isn't going to be feasible.

"I have asked all of the motorcycle importers to look at Arenacross as a promotion for motorcycling in general as during the winter as there isn't any road race or motocross action going on and that's actually been met with real positivity and understanding. Race team owners have been absolutely amazing and I can't thank them enough for the support they've given me over the years but more recently their commitment to Arenacross has been a breath of fresh air and spurs me on every day to make sure it doesn't fail. Just look at the riders that are racing the series – Villopoto, Aranda, Izoid, Coulon, Whatley, EBB, Bradshaw, Chatfield, Clarke and Brunell. Has there ever been a more promising line up of riders in this country other than for one-off races? That's all down to the team owners' commitment to winning the series!"

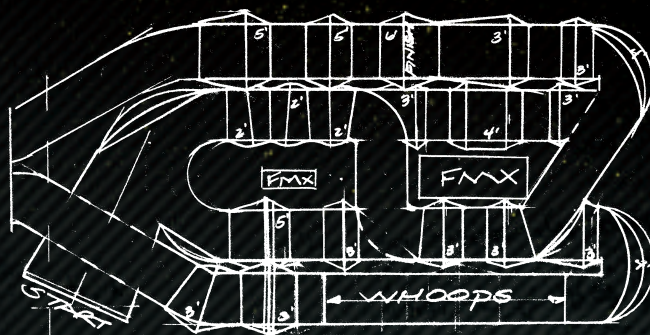
DBR: On a personal level, what part of laying on Arenacross do you like most?

MB: "That's a really difficult question because along the journey I enjoy certain parts of it just as much as the next. As an event organiser your role changes literally by the hour but most certainly the high point for me is creating the show. Combining music, lights, lasers, riders, live screens and compares might look like it all falls in to place without too much effort but don't be fooled it's incredibly difficult because I put myself under so much pressure due to being an absolute stickler for making sure everything is perfect. I can't stand disorganisation, there's no excuse for it and I get a massive buzz when it all comes together. But don't get me wrong, we're often flying on the seat of our pants and when the last person walks out of the arena there's many a grown man that sheds a tear – that's not because we're a bunch of fairies but it's such an intensely high pressured environment that when the pressure lifts it really is the most emotional feeling."

DBR: Do you have a target? Where do you see Arenacross in five years time?

MB: "Yes, if there's one thing I've always got then it's a plan. That plan might be only ever in my head but it's there locked away and ready to be released at the right time. I will say that it's very easy for me to say that I want Arenacross to keep expanding but I do like to think I'm a realist and the fact is that we are a small country that probably can't sustain more than eight events in one season. My future goal is to expand Arenacross throughout Europe and with the right partner I can't see why that can't happen."

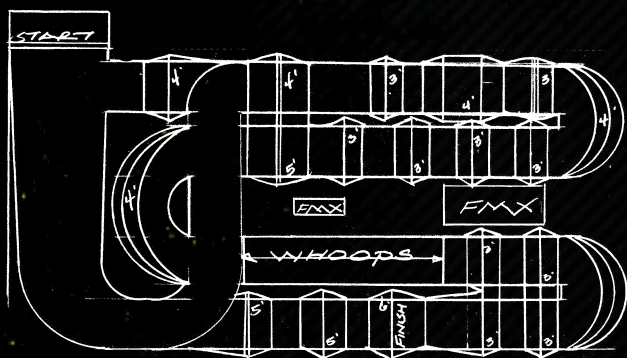
2014 AXUK TRACK GUIDE



001 BELFAST

JANUARY 17 - ODYSSEY ARENA

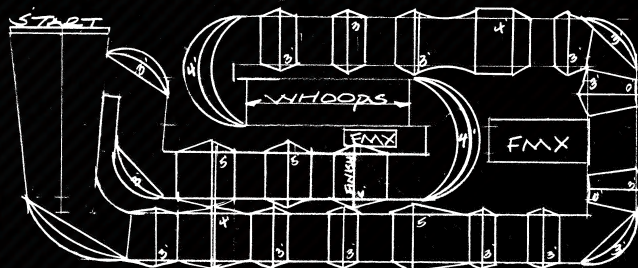
There has been some great indoor racing seen at the Odyssey over the years and 2014's should be no different as the season starts with a bang on an uber-technical Dirt Wurx designed and built circuit. The opener features a track with a plethora of rhythm sections as well as a lengthy whoop section leading into a hairpin left – expect plenty of passing here. In fact with four 180 degree turns – one's hidden out in the tunnel – you can expect plenty of passing everywhere so it should be a night to remember especially when you add some opening night nerves into the mix.



004 LIVERPOOL

FEBRUARY 2 - ECHO ARENA

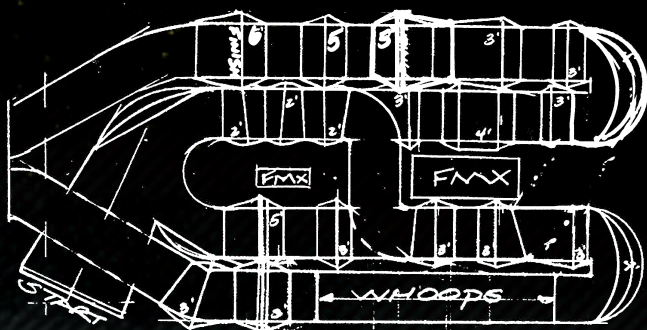
Round four in Liverpool's Echo Arena sees another strange start set up but aside from that it all looks like standard stuff in this large and well-lit arena. The rhythm sections, whoops and big right hand sweeper backwards up the start straight are where the majority of time will be made up or lost. The three 180 degree turns will be where the majority of the passing happens though – especially in the super intense head-to-heads.



005 NEWCASTLE

FEBRUARY 9 - METRO ARENA

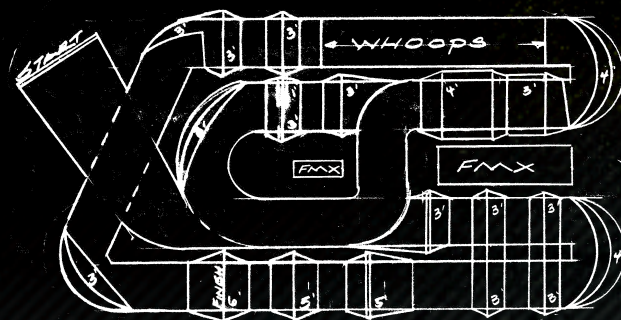
Indoor motorcycle racing makes its debut in Newcastle's Metro Arena for round five of the championship and the initial plan makes us think it's a relatively long and thin floor space. Dirt Wurx have come up with an interesting layout that separates it from the majority of the other tracks in the series so it should be an interesting weekend. The short start will make gate pick essential so expect hard racing – and first turn crashes! – all night.



002 BELFAST

JANUARY 18 - ODYSSEY ARENA

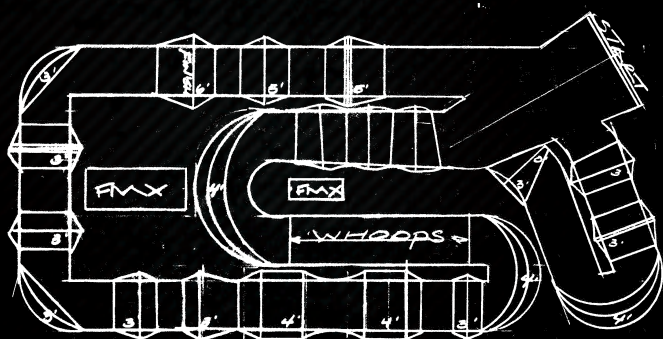
Happening just 24 hours after round one – and in the same arena – you'd almost expect the track for round two to be the same as the first but e22 are offering up a whole new challenge for the second night with the track even running in the opposite direction!



003 BIRMINGHAM

JANUARY 25 - LG ARENA

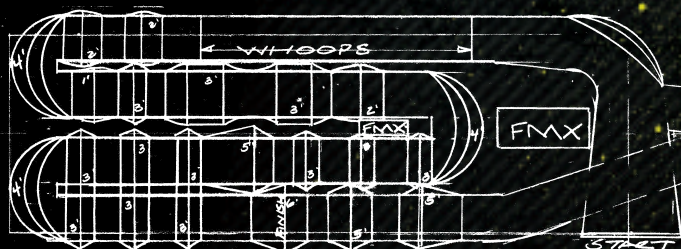
Turns one and two should prove interesting at Birmingham as for one lap only the track weaves between the FMX take off ramp and landing – whether anyone gets stuffed into the truck remains to be seen but I wouldn't bet against it! The LG Arena is reasonably spacious and the track design shows it with just two hairpin bends, a roomy 180, a high speed 45 and an uber-tight 135 degree left joining it all together. Soil quality was pretty poor for last year's Birmingham bash but expect that to be rectified this time around.



006 SHEFFIELD

FEBRUARY 15 - MOTORPOINT ARENA

Sheffield is the spiritual home of UK supercross and Dirt Wurx has gone all out to create a doozie of a dirt track for round six of the series. A short start shoot into a triple jump kicks things off before a 180 degree left leads the racers into the whoops. A 180 right then takes 'em down a rhythm section to the far end of the arena where a tricky double awaits. From there it's a high speed blast towards the finish line triple before the racers cross the start and hit a small double entering a right hand hairpin – this should be block pass central!



007 LONDON

MARCH 1 - WEMBLEY ARENA

The floor space at London's Wembley Arena is very long and narrow so the track for the finale will be tight! Featuring no fewer than four 180-degree turns expect to see lots of block passes especially with championship titles on the line. To increase the length of the lap the track disappears into the service tunnel – a feature also seen at Belfast and last year's season opener in the O2.

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The UK is a great home for motocross and since us Brits invented the sport so it should be. But the sport's evolved from those original air-cooled bikes to everything being water-cooled and with that we inherited a consequential problem – our bikes don't survive freezing temperatures without taking preventative measures. We use the term water-cooled, but water is not the right liquid as it freezes at temperatures below zero. A frozen ice cube in your bike may not sound a problem until you accept that ice expands and can crack your cylinder clean in half or burst your radiator. You may get lucky and split a hose but the gamble is not worth taking.

And just because you topped your bike up with coolant do not automatically think that means you have protection because summer coolants are formulated to prevent the casing material from furring up, and may not have any antifreeze content at all.

My own tester came from Halfords and at £1.99 did not break the bank. The test is quick and easy – just dip the tip in your coolant and suck a little coolant up. Depending on how many balls float will tell you if you are in danger, would benefit by changing your coolant or are sitting pretty and have no need to worry. Newish bikes on the original coolant should be protected sufficiently but remember that if you topped up with water then your coolant is already diluted.

MR FREEZE!

Frozen bike parts suck so make sure you don't fall victim to Jack Frost...

Words and photos by [Rob Bayman](#)



01 Dip the hydrometer in the radiator and suck some coolant up. You need enough liquid so all three balls can float.



02 Only one ball is floating which shows insufficient antifreeze levels so changing it is recommended. If the test is clear you're now finished for the day so well done you!



03 Most if not all bikes have a coolant drain point at the lowest point of the cooling system and now's the time to locate it...



04 Releasing the pressure cap prevents a vacuum and allows the system to drain.



05 Catching the draining liquid will simply make the job cleaner and more comfortable.



06 If the drain point is hidden or obstructed you can pull the lowest water pipe from the bike and drain there.



07 Not that you need help here, but once the drain screw or removed pipe is returned, fill the cooling system with antifreeze.



08 The system will trap air, some bikes like the KTM have a bleed point to release trapped air, but leaning the bike over is another way to release air.



09 Once filled with antifreeze there's no real need to do the test again but to show you the difference we did it anyway!



TRACK ATTACK!

WE FOLLOW THE LEGEND THAT IS TOM ARNOLD AS HE CREATES A BRAND-NEW MOTOCROSS MASTERPIECE FROM SCRATCH THAT HE'S CALLING HILTON MOTO PARC

Words and photos by **Mike Gurney**

He's had almost a quarter of a century at this MX game and the recent Hilton Moto Parc development and the way he went about it is just typical of the man, his zest for life and this sport. The Barmouth beach race weekend is another of his productions and over the next year he will be putting on near 30 off-road events and running a meeting almost every week throughout the autumn, winter and spring. And with a few more irons in the fire for the summer Tom Arnold is a man for all seasons.

"What you see is what you get" and "he does exactly what it says on the tin" are just two of the common epithets he's tagged with and for anyone who knows him well or even for those with just a glancing blow of awareness the tags are clearly understandable. He's an amiable, plain talking, down to earth bloke from the heart of the West Midlands and he delivers on his promises. But for some in this sport, no matter what he does he can appear to be on the wrong

side of the MX divide.

Remembering back 10 years or more the Wilden MXC mother track at Wilden Lane near Kidderminster was one of the very few places open for winter MX. As a result riders travelled from all corners and all the youth champions of the time rode there on a regular basis – Ray Rowson, Steven Clark, Ashley Greedy, Shane Carless, Scott Elderfield, Josh Waterman, Ryan Houghton and Connor Walkley are just a few of the quality names that provided racing that was better than that seen at the Nationals some weekends. That was then though and while Wilden Lane in winter isn't quite the magnet it used to be Tom Arnold continues to move with the times giving the punters exactly what they want. And that's where the Hilton Moto Parc plan comes in!

Step one – acquire the piece of real estate in question. The land already possessed a few rough trails laid down over the years by the local non-kosher off-road club but more importantly had heaps and heaps of natural

potential for both MX and Enduro events. Land incidentally which Tom had been keeping close tabs on for a while and was keen to get his 'let's develop' hands on.

Step two – once given the green light Tom had to turn it all around within three weeks if he wanted to deliver a pukka new MX venue complete with the wow factor. That shouldn't have been too much of a problem as it was only the beginning of December and the launch meeting wasn't until December 23 so there was plenty of time and a race just three days before Christmas had to be a good idea n'all, don't you think? I mean, what the hell could possibly go wrong?

Thinking back on it now there was quite a lot could have gone wrong like a bit of not too welcome seasonal snow for instance or a drop too much of the wet stuff falling or maybe even frozen solid ground to deal with? And then just how many riders could you reasonably expect to be let loose by wives, girlfriends and mothers to go racing on one of the busiest

Mmm, you want to ride me don't you?



The man in his machine...

Youth sensation Robert Yates shreds a Hilton Moto Parc berm



A big entry for the maiden meeting all enjoyed their day out...



shopping days of the year? Now while any of the aforementioned could have been a good old solid reason for some delaying the job I doubt very much any of the negatives crossed Tom's thinking for too long as here is a man who doesn't know the meaning of can't be done.

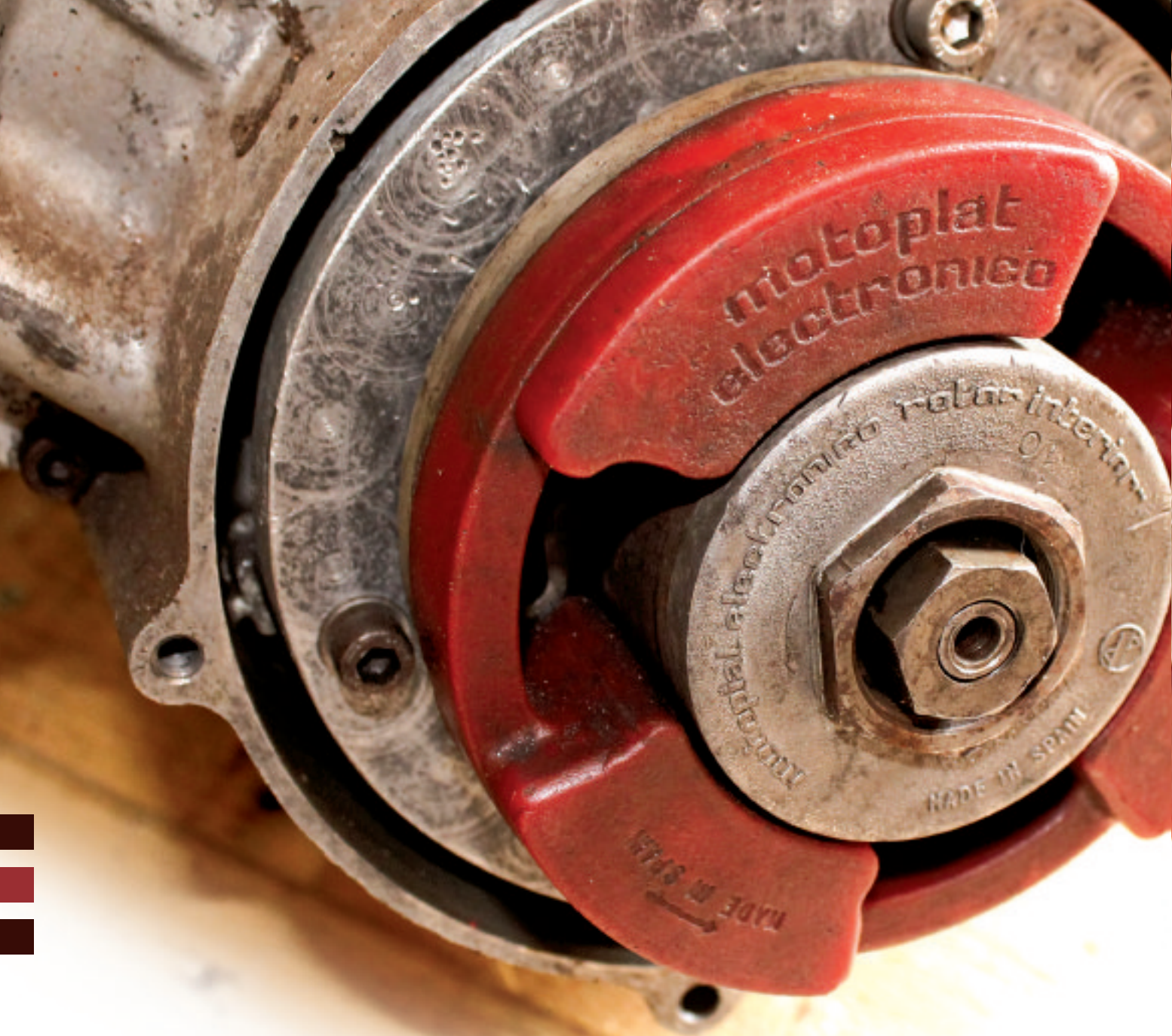
With more than 20 years of running MX events, developing new circuits and revamping old ones — and mainly in winter too — Tom doesn't easily get fazed by the challenge of the elements and breaking new ground. But the project didn't exactly get off to the best of possible starts with the first week lost when the heavy earth moving machine got tied up elsewhere.

So with now just 10 working days to perform a minor miracle it was a case of no worries lads, crack on and fortunately the lads in question were ace GP track builder Justin Barclay and ACU technician Andy Summers.

On day one of the new schedule and with the machines now all present and correct Barclay duly took one look at the ground then promptly

fired up the bulldozer and simply let his vision, experience and artistry take over. Working without a plan the wooded section took shape first and over the course of the next five days the track fully emerged in all its glory with Hilton Moto Parc being born. On the seventh day with creation finished Barclay rested and Andy Summers and Tom Arnold himself took over in the hot seat — the JCB hot seat that is. By midweek the track — including a makeshift paddock — was done and all it required now was a few final touches and a few riders too.

Now you recall the drop of wet stuff I mentioned earlier? Well, they didn't exactly escape that one completely unscathed as a torrential downpour overnight on the eve of racing which lasted until a few hours before racing turned the paddock area into something more akin to a typical Glastonbury. But hey ho the all important circuit stood up better than good, delivering sweet music and ultimately it received a massive thumbs up from the 200 plus riders who swerved the Xmas shopping.



A *POINTLESS* **EXERCISE!**

GENERATING A SPARK TO IGNITE THE EXPLOSION - RIGHT AT THE OPTIMUM MOMENT - IS LIKE GOOD COMEDY. IT'S ALL ABOUT TIMING!

Words and photos by **Rob Bayman**

The XT motors start life with contact points, which may confuse the new generation of mechanics who probably have little knowledge of what they actually do. So, for the technically minded (or any remotely interested nut turners), here's a brief walk-through of the system...

Unlike the systems we are familiar with, the generator does not energise the bike's ignition system. All power is supplied directly from the battery, with all those odd-looking parts in position, merely to charge the battery for

the motor's continual dependency of electric current. Charging systems – like on our XT motor – primarily have an alternator charging system, including a regulator to prevent overcharging and bridge rectifier to convert the AC output to DC. Together, these prevent the battery from pickling – and that's it!

Without the charging system, the bike would be like a torch that works fine from charged batteries and gets dimmer as the battery flattens or needs replacing – our spark would be the same. A live supply from the battery – indirectly once – feeds the coil's low-

voltage (LT) positive side, with the LT negative continuing to the contactor points to complete the LT Circuit. The contactor points are insulated from the earth of the bike on one side, with the other direct-to-earth, completing the circuit as the contactor point's gap closes.

A condenser is wired in parallel, within the same circuit, to cushion any surges at the points and prevent current-fusing, by absorbing LT surges. Contactor points open and close as the motor rotates, to make or break the LT circuit following a cam. The small cam working the contactor points is much like a minute



version of the cam shaft, but instead of opening the valves with an elliptical lobe, it opens and closes the contactor points in sequence with the motor, triggering a spark at the plug each time the contactor points open.

The coil is an inductive device, where voltage circulates through lots of fine windings of wire, wrapped round an iron core to create a magnetic field. The magnetic field then induces another series of wire windings, wrapped round the same iron core within the coil and transduces back to electric, changing its form from low-voltage at high current to high-voltage

at low current, directly proportional, other than scientific losses. The change in form is a bit like looking at a gallon of liquid in either a tall, slim vessel or a short, broad one – both still remain 'a gallon', or, in the case of a coil: a Watt.

The high-voltage (HT) output from the coil goes to the spark plug where the electrode is insulated from earth. An area of electrical science proves that when an inductive circuit is broken, a momentary surge of exceptionally high voltage purges. This can be compared to the reason light bulbs only blow when you turn

them on or off – or perhaps you hadn't noticed that bulbs never just suddenly stop working when they are illuminated? The purge that occurs is that momentary blast of higher power which blows the bulb. Transferring the blowing light bulb example to the coil situation, when an inductive circuit is made or broken, think of the contactor points being like the light switch. As they open, they trigger a surge which is at the HT side of sufficient voltage for a spark to jump the plug's gap as that voltage follows the line of least resistance to earth. This perhaps explains why plug-gapping is so important.

I hope that was helpful, but it is alas of no use to the future of the DBR500F. Rather than struggle on with old-school electrics, we are heading digital with a full 'bolt on', instant-performance, Electrex World, highly technical (and, yes, brilliant) complete set up!

Our motor was already stripped of its points and battery, running an aged but rare Motoplat Magneto, believed to be taken from a Rotax Kart engine. The bulky, resin-encased Motoplat system was sort of useful in days gone by, as it did away with a battery – although we believe it had static position timing. The static timing means it could be set to run well at high speed, or was easy to start, but never both.

Here is where the auto-advancing ignition systems on modern bikes have hugely improved upon the archaic systems. They analyse the speed, everything that happens internally and the time it takes to ignite the explosion, which expands with sufficient punch to create enough inertia and spin the crank two full turns, to reach the next ignition stroke – now that's some controlled explosion going on!

Timing advances at different RPM change the whole dynamic of an engine's power. The spark needs to ignite the fuel just before the piston hits TDC, starting the flame-spread earlier, as the motor runs faster, in order to get optimum efficiency before the moment passes. Slow the 'real time' cycle of the motor down and you can understand what happens to allow the explosion of fuel to transfer energy types sufficiently, in order to thrust the piston down and start momentum.

It is predicted that just 7 degrees before TDC is best at low revs on the Yamaha XT motor. Take the stroke of the bike at 84mm and that 7 degrees is just 3.2mm before the piston reaches its highest point at 2000 RPM, whereas at 5000 RPM – because the speed of the piston is that much quicker and the speed of the explosion remains the same – the spark is generated earlier, at more like 30 degrees or 14mm before the piston reaches TDC, as it all happens so quickly.

This is probably similar to shooting at a moving target, where you aim in front of the target to allow the bullet to travel the distance, as the target reaches the point where they meet. The faster the target moves, the further ahead of it you need to aim.

Our Electrex World STK-407 system incorporates those entire 'moving target' calculations within one complete kit – a stator, mount, rotor and coil with a CDI which identifies the crank position and the delay between intervals to quickly analyse the RPM before calculating the optimum moment to spark. By understanding the speed of the motor and sending the pulse those fractions of a moment earlier, to maintain optimum performance, the give-efficiency increases, which shows as increased torque throughout the whole rev range of the bike.

All that mind-numbing science is history thanks to Electrex World's easy-to-fit, bolt-on package, costing around £200. It is not worth considering scavenging alternatives or cobbling together something of lesser glory when a superior 'off-the-shelf' system exists.



THE COMEBACK KID!

In a life-story that's featured more twists than the plot of a bad movie, Luke Hawkins has had his fair share of knocks but has taken them all on the chin to bounce back even stronger...

Words and photos by Mark Turner

In August 2010, we ran an article entitled 'The New Wave: Is Luke Hawkins the Next Big Thing?' At the time it was a question on a lot of people's lips and rightly so. At only 16-years-old he was already into his first year as a pro motocrosser and looked to be heading in the right direction to carve out a successful MX2 career both here in the UK and in Europe. While it would have been great to carry on in this vein, telling a story of success after success unfortunately we can't.

An injury plagued 2011 and a problematic first half of the 2012 season with Hooper Suzuki more-or-less left Hawkins at an all-time-low. He even questioned his future in the sport but making what was considered by many to be a surprise decision – to walk away from MX2 in favour of MX1 – would ultimately see the re-emergence of Luke Hawkins' winning ways. He wrapped up the Phoenix Tools championship and proved a few doubters wrong at the last round of the British championship at Farleigh Castle...

DBR: Since we last spoke in 2010 a

lot has happened in your career. Let's start with last year when after two pretty nightmarish seasons you finally got back to winning ways, taking the Phoenix Tools championship in pretty dominant fashion...

LH: "Yeah, for sure. It's been a little while since we've had any success at the races. This year I felt had to be a turning point for me going by what had happened in 2011 and 2012. At the start of the year, I had no idea of what to expect as this was going to be my first full season in MX1 but I'd put the work in during the winter and my fitness wasn't going to let me down. That was a big factor.

"Also, doing the Phoenix Tools series has helped me in regaining my confidence on the bike. The series is really strong now and every round I was battling hard, with the likes of Snowy and Carless to name just a few and I was still getting the results! I suppose its just one of those natural things – you start doing well at something and you get better at it so we were able to take that to the bigger races and, by the end of the year, I started to feel like I was back to somewhere I felt I should be."

>>





DBR: The move from MX2 to MX1, would we be right in thinking we need to go back to the beginning of 2012 to get the full story?

LH: "Well the whole process could, I suppose, be tracked back to as far as 2011. As you know I had the big accident at Hawkstone, bounced back pretty well from it and then broke my arm almost straight away. I was done for – both my confidence and my fitness were gone and the year was done along with the ride at PAR Honda."

"Then, for 2012 I joined Rob Hooper's Suzuki squad and, putting it diplomatically, things didn't work out and we parted company just past the mid-point of the season. A last-minute deal came up with Moto-One KTM riding Bry Mac's ex-race bikes. That only lasted for a month because the bikes we were promised didn't even turn up! There we were, with no bikes and no team, so we had to act quickly if we were going to salvage anything from the rest of the season."

"So my Dad and I decided to bite the bullet and buy our own bike to see us out. We went with the intention of getting a 250F KTM but couldn't get one so after some thought and weighing up the running costs of the 250 we decided maybe the 350 would be the better option to see us through because we were now going to have to pay to run the thing! So the 350 it was. We picked it up on a Saturday morning, ran it in on the Saturday afternoon, ready to go racing on the Sunday."

DBR: And that first race went pretty well?

LH: "Yeah, it was a round of the Phoenix. I won all three races!"

DBR: Was it then that you thought a move to MX1 might be a good option for your career in light of what had happened over the past couple of seasons?

LH: "No, not really. As I said, the 350 was just

to see us through the last few races of the year. There was never a plan to move onto the 450 come the end of the season. Dad wasn't overly keen either – saying I was too young to jump on the big bikes but decent rides were becoming hard to find. I was open to offers whether in MX2 or maybe MX1."

"It was then that I got a call from Dave Thorpe, asking us to go down and meet with him and Dickie Dye, after Dickie had seen my rides on the 350 at Little Silver and Ladram Bay. They wanted to talk to me about riding a 450 Honda on the Phoenix Tools team and I had a big decision to make. Deep down, I still knew that if I was on my A game I could run top five in the UK in MX2 but no deals were forthcoming and I knew we couldn't afford to build and run a fast 250F on our own. The deal with Dave was 450 only, so Dad, Mark Robbins (a personal sponsor) and I sat down and talked it through at length. We came to the decision that the best way forward for me, career-wise in the long term, was to go onto 450 and the deal was done with Phoenix Tools."

DBR: And all this was done on the back of you not having actually raced a 450. Were you comfortable with that?

LH: "Looking back now, yeah I suppose it was a risk – and, as I mentioned before, it was a hard decision to make – but once it was all done and dusted I knew I'd done the right thing. I already knew the guys around the team and knew I could trust them."

"Once I was on the bike it didn't take that long to adapt to it, to be honest. I'd started off on the stock 450 and rode that for the first half of the season then had an Aubin-spec motor for the second half which was a good way of adapting to a fast 450. There was no way I could have jumped straight onto the tuned bike because there's such a difference but I was finding I could ride a lot better. I think the secret

is pulling higher gears in the corners and not having to be on the limit all the time, as you have to be on the 250."

DBR: How do you feel it went for you at the Maxxis in 2013?

LH: "Not as good as I had expected really. At the beginning of the year, for the first couple of rounds, I was still getting used to the bike and working on finding a good set up. That soon came together and we were making Superpole on a regular basis. Building on that, I should have been running top 10 or top eight, maybe. But it was just a confidence thing in the starts that got in the way. I knew the speed was getting there – I was proving that down at the Phoenix Tools. Okay, I'd had a bit of bad luck with crashes but not getting the starts in the Maxxis 20 minute motos, against the likes of Ando, Whatley and Barragan was hampering any progress."

DBR: But then for the last round at Farleigh you completely turned it around and we finally got to see – for a couple of motos at least – the Luke Hawkins of old...

LH: "Yeah, for the week leading up to Farleigh I was pretty ill with the flu which wasn't ideal but I still managed to get out on the bike and spent most of it practising starts with Dickie. I know I can go well around Farleigh – plus it's my home round, so to speak – so I was looking forward to it despite not feeling 100 per cent."

"As soon as we got going I felt good on the bike, and qualified fifth, followed by an eighth in Superpole, which wasn't so bad. In the first moto, I got a great jump out of the gate, stuck it tight into the first corner and exited in front. I led it for a couple of laps until Whatley came past. I settled into second and was riding – I felt – a pretty controlled, comfortable race until two laps from the end when the effects of the illness during the week came back to haunt

THE COACH!

Dickie Dye shares his thoughts on Luke...

DBR: What was your assessment of Luke when he first joined up with you and the team?

DD: "I began to get to know Luke when Swordy joined Suzuki and we were all practising together. Luke doubled up with Swordy on riding training days and I saw his potential immediately – not necessarily on the track (although we all know he can ride the bike) but off it. Swordy was always the first to be ready, onto his bike and onto the track and Luke was always a close second, while all the others were still fiddling with their tear-offs!"

"I knew Luke was coming back from injury and then, over the six month period while he was riding for Rob (Hooper), I paid more and more attention to him practising and at the races.

"At a Phoenix premier round at Little Silver last year, Luke turned up on a 350 KTM, having ended his deal with Hooper and, to be quite honest, he rode superbly and gave us all another glimpse of his ability. For me, right then, it was a no-brainer.

"I had a brief chat with his dad then and, over the course of the next few weeks, I put a plan together for 2013 – to work with Luke on Hondas in the MX1 class and the bikes were to be supplied by Dave (Thorpe) who I was working with at the time. The goal for 2013 was to have a safe, consistent, injury (and breakdown) free season with realistic goals to set Luke's motocross career back on track."

DBR: He seems to have a massive desire for success. Do you sense that in his attitude towards training and racing?

DD: "Yes. Luke is a classic example of a racer who is chomping at the bit and ready to go... but he needs holding back in some ways. I know this may be a strange thing to say but I believe motocross is a steady progression. You cannot go from zero to hero in one season and sustain it – that doesn't happen in any sport to any athlete! I think racers need realistic goals which they must achieve before they move on to the next.

"If he could, Luke would cycle or run to the gym at seven in the morning and leave at five at night and would then get on his bike and do 40 minute motos! There is a balance which all racers must understand – this whole deal is a marathon, not a sprint. You have got to know when to work, ride and train and when to rest. Or have someone close to you, who you trust, to tell you what to do and when. Luke has a great attitude to training and racing. It is his whole life. This is everything to Luke and, fortunately, Kelvin and Tracey (his mum and dad) are 100 per cent with him on this journey. I know, without them, this whole life-plan would be very difficult if not impossible."

DBR: What would you say has been his biggest improvement this year?

DD: "I am really pleased to say that there hasn't been just one big improvement – there have been many. Luke has grown into his position in British Motocross at a level and constant pace over the year. He's still so young and there is so much to learn and work on. If I was forced to pick one dominant point of improvement, I would say his overall confidence on the bike. Two holeshots out of three at Farleigh proved his confidence to get out of the gate and mix it up a bit but he – and we – have a long, long way to go. He knows it is going to get harder, the higher he aims. I know he's up for it!

"The bike obviously helps and, for 2014, Luke will have the very best Phoenix Tools Rocket Honda CRF450R. We have already been testing a prototype for some time and we are getting loads of help from Don Leib at Rocket Exhausts in the USA which will help the team.

"I know Luke had offers from other teams and I am really pleased he is staying with us – though the road to this point has been rocky, to say the least. There have been a few ups and downs over the past few months but we now have a great, positive team with some great sponsors who have belief in us all as individuals and as a team. They've helped us get to where we are now, in preparation for 2014."

me and my energy just went resulting in Ando and Aubin getting by and leaving me to finish fourth. It was weird. I was both happy and disappointed – happy to get a fourth moto finish at a British round but disappointed to miss out on that top three.

"Between the races, Dickie just said to me, 'Look, you've just proved that if you gate well you can run the pace so just go through our process, try your best and see what happens'. I think deep down he knew that me still not being 100 per cent well was going to catch up with me but it was his job to keep me motivated.

"It worked too – in the second moto, again I got a great jump and holeshot and led for a few laps until Whatley passed again, leaving me in a comfortable second position for about half the race. Then I made a silly mistake out the back and stalled the bike. I'd lost a shed load of places but got my head down to finish 11th at the flag.

"By the time the third moto came around, I was struggling if I'm honest. I'd put so much into those first two races and was feeling the effects but, nevertheless, I was still up for good final moto. Unfortunately it wasn't to be. Although, again, I got a good start, it just got really bunched in the first turn and I went down and then from more-or-less restarting last, I managed, I think, to get back up to 16th.

"For the following week's Phoenix Tools championship decider at Landrake, I took the confidence from Farleigh, and proved it wasn't just a one-off. Ando had decided to stay down and do the race too. In qualifying, only a hundredth of a second separated the two of us so I knew I was on the pace straight away. I rode a steady, sensible first race to wrap up the championship and had a really close race with him in moto two. I even passed him on the last lap! I mean, after all the tough times I'd been through I was battling for a race win with a former British champion!"



Luke loves being in the gym!

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DBR: So without taking the last race into account, do you feel you have proved some of your doubters wrong by finally showing your ability to run the pace at the front in MX1 at British championship level?

LH: "Yeah, I think I have. I can say with confidence that if I'd felt the same at Farleigh as I did the following week at Landrake, and hadn't still been shaking off the flu, I could have finished second in the first race and top three in the second for sure – and who knows in the last! It was just a pity it was the last round as it would have been good to carry the form into another British round."

DBR: So with 2013 ending on a high note, you must feel confident going into this year?

LH: "Definitely. After a few other offers, I've re-signed with Phoenix Tools Honda for this year, to defend my championship with them, as well as doing both the Red Bull and Maxxis British championships. As you probably already know, Alex Snow has been signed to the team too. The team seems to be growing constantly, helped by Barry (the team owner) and his continued investment. This is proof in itself that the goal is to be a major player within the British motocross paddock and to take that success onto the track."

"I've set myself the goal of running in the top five or top seven, maybe. I know there are going to be some fast boys in there, but if I can out of the gate I'd like to think I can run the same sort of pace as the guys at the front."

DBR: A lot has changed for you – so much so that you now have to go out to work. With



Luke's serving an apprenticeship in the motor trade



A lack of new 250Fs on sale meant a move to MX1 was more or less forced but it all worked out well



Luke will be looking to stay at the front of the pack in 2014

LUKE HAWKINS

everything that has happened did you feel the need to get a trade to fall back on?

LH: "Not really. I'm still fully focused on making a career in motocross. I'm still only 19 and would like to think I've still got a good 10 years in me so there's plenty of time to make it happen. I often look back over the careers of Ando and Whatley, so far – just chipping away, chipping away, season after season until it all falls into place. I'd like to think I was taking the same sort of path."

"As far as work goes, I was basically looking for an income during the off-season, to help fund the racing. It was then that Mark offered me the chance to go over and give him a hand at his garage. I've been with him now for a year or so and help out with the servicing and repairs in the workshop. I'm also lucky that Mark knows and appreciates my situation and it's never a problem if I need time away from work to go on a training camp or get some riding time in during the week. I have sometimes found it hard having to work until 5.30pm, get myself home to go training and then do some bike prep-work afterwards – before you know it, it's the wrong side of 10pm! You do have to manage your time pretty well. Race days are

the worst – getting home late and knowing you've got to be up at seven in the morning to go to work! But all this makes me more determined to go out and beat the pro riders – it's what motivates me and I proved it can be done with the rides at Farleigh."

DBR: You're a year into working with Dickie Dye as your coach and mentor – how has that been?

LH: "It's been great. It's the first time in my career that I've worked with anyone and I think a lot of what we talked about earlier can be put down to the way he's coached me. I feel like I'm working on a different level now than any time previously and being able to continue to have Dickie work with me was a big factor in where I chose to ride for this year."

"Some of his methods did come as a bit of a shock at first – like the time we turned up at FatCat in sub-zero conditions and while most people were turning around to go home we were made to go out and put the laps in! All the training we do is pretty intense and all done to a specific program – gradually building up as we get closer to the opener at Landrake in March."

OCEANS APART?

JUST HOW MUCH DOES AMATEUR AND YOUTH MOTOCROSS DIFFER ACROSS THE ATLANTIC? OUR MAN JEFF PERRETT TAKES A TRIP TO THE THOR WINTER OLYMPICS AMATEUR NATIONALS (AFFECTIONATELY KNOWN AS THE MINI O'S) TO FIND OUT...

Words and photos by **Jeff Perrett**

I've said it before and my mind hasn't changed so I'll say it again – American motocross drives our industry. For all of the prestige and history of World Championship Grand Prix motocross you can't deny the influence America has on our sport. Ever since the Trans-AMA series of the 1970s when the likes of Roger De Coster, Sylvain Geboers and Britain's Dave Nicoll (who are all still actively involved in the sport at the highest level) went to America to help establish the sport there the American's have been a driving and influential force. They introduced supercross to the world and pretty much from that moment on the USA has shaped the future of the sport. From the reintroduction of the four-stroke to the look and feel of a modern motocross track – and let's not forget the fashion – the majority of the coolest stuff comes from 'Uncle Sam'.

With all that in mind, I took flight in the 'metal bird' to Florida looking forward to seeing how youth and amateur motocross compares to how we do it here in Europe. I've been to several AMA Nationals in my life so I know the fundamental differences between them and the GPs. I've also been to a several supercross races and, well, they definitely don't compare to anything here – not until we also start filling 80,000 seater stadiums!

As team manager of Kawasaki Team Green UK, I was travelling with Dylan Woodcock, one of our 85cc riders. He was racing in two classes (of many but we'll get to that in a moment) – the 12-13 85cc limited and modified classes. 'Limited' means you race a stock bike, only being able to change the handlebars and 'modified' meaning you can go to town with tuning and suspension.

Thankfully for us both, all we pretty much

had to do was turn up and concentrate on the racing. After several emails Kawasaki USA had very kindly offered to loan Dylan the stock bike through their Team Green programme and Mitch Payton at Pro Circuit helped us out with a tricked out KX85 for Dylan's modified class bike.

By the end of the week 'Beaker' Woodcock hadn't let himself down, finishing 10th in both the limited 85cc supercross and motocross finals, eighth in the modified 85cc supercross and seventh in the motocross racing against most of America's best he ended up being the highest overall placed Kawasaki rider in his classes. If it wasn't for sluggish starts it could've and should've been better but it was a fantastic learning experience for him (as it was for me) and he was certainly living the 'factory racer' dream for the week...but he wasn't alone.

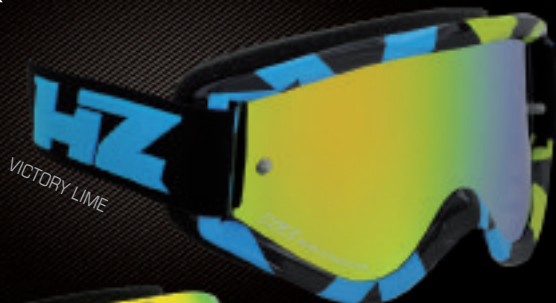
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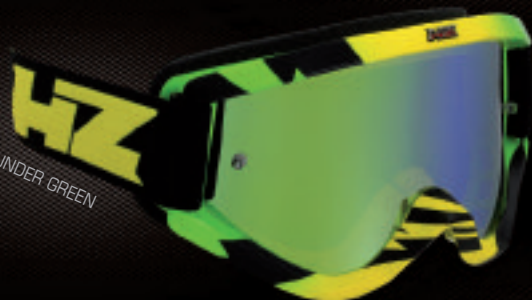


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A DIFFERENT VIEW...

WHAT THE MINI O'S MEANS TO PAST STARS AND INDUSTRY BIGWIGS...

The Mini O's attracts plenty of industry big hitters and racers from yesteryear. Here are some words from three of those on what the event is all about for them...

RYAN HOLLIDAY TEAM GREEN USA MANAGER

"We have 19 contracted riders ranging from the 65cc class all the way up to our A class guys who are about to turn professional. Every rider is different regarding the preparation, some we prepare their bike for in house and then bring to the events, others prepare their own bikes. We only really tend to prepare the A class riders bikes where it's really important that they have good equipment because our competitors also do at that stage just before turning pro. The 65 and 85cc guys prepare their own bikes but we still help out as much as we can by supplying all of the equipment they need to get the job done. They have an online system that they order their parts from so it's all planned out and pretty smooth and simple.

"We've had a good programme going for a long time. Carmichael, Stewart, Villopoto; they've all come through the Team Green programme. I think because of that and the history of it we have a target on our back. It adds pressure for us to keep finding the right riders and doing the job right but that's part of the job. It's got a lot more serious in the past few years with rival manufactures getting more involved at amateur level and it's now really competitive. I think some of them are taking chances with the programme they've put together. We're going to stick to our philosophy and what we do. I've been in the job five years now and it's very rewarding, we have some good riders on the programme that I'm sure will be regular names you'll see on professional supercross and motocross podiums in the future."

racing here in Britain and Europe versus across the pond is the level of industry support – it's a huge chasm. It doesn't just cater for the best riders either. Most manufactures turn up to the big youth and amateur nationals with all guns blazing. Huge rigs and trailers are immaculately packed out with virtually every spare part a rider will need.

Having a snoop inside the Team Green rig brought it all home. It was arguably more professional than some established GP teams and all this for amateur and youth racers! If you race a Kawasaki, no matter of your results or class if you have a mechanical issue all you have to do is bring your bike over to the Team Green rig and they'll fix the problem free of charge.

Okay you may have to buy the parts you need but they come at a significant discount so anyone would be a fool not to take up the offer. It's a service that Kawasaki has been doing for a long time now and the other manufacturers have all pretty much followed suit.

Even aftermarket manufactures do the same. Pro Circuit were on hand in their huge truck and trailer offering race support to anyone using their products and selling product at special

'Mini O' event prices. Factory Connection was also on hand offering a free suspension set-up service to anyone regardless of what suspension they were running.

As for the event itself it's the same kind of animal but a very different species. The Mini O's is a week long event combining supercross and motocross into its programme. The supercross opens the event on Monday and runs through to Wednesday, as soon as it's finished all eyes turn to the motocross track as practice gets underway. There's no break in between, no stopping for lunch or marshal breaks, and it's a relentless march through from 7.30am until the light starts to fade.

You'd think that with a week to get the job done why rush, right? Well, when you consider there are 38 classes to get through, several with entries of up to 80 riders to whittle down through qualifiers it's no wonder they don't have time to stop. There are race classes to cater for everyone from a 45 year old plus class down to the auto 50cc class and everything in between.

It's great to see former pros like two-time world champion Trampas Parker, Metal Mulisha guru Brian Deegan and 'Mad' Mike Jones out there still banging bars but the real

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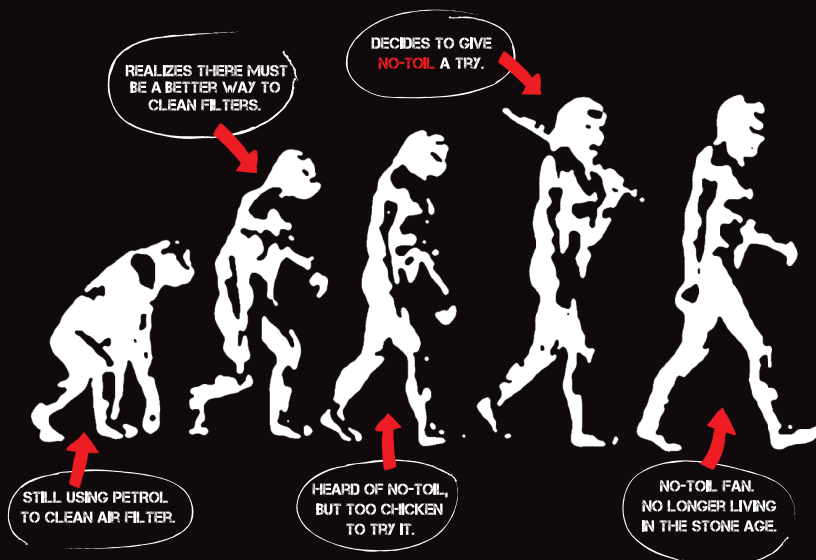
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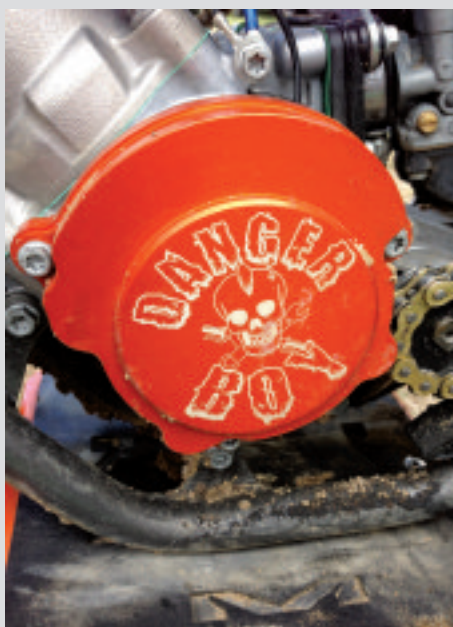
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BRIAN DEEGAN FOUNDER OF THE METAL MULISHA AND SX WINNER

"My first year here was 1987. Me and my dad used to come down here and I raced for Team Green back in the day. I grew up in Nebraska and we used to sleep in our van and travel down here and camp out and every Thanksgiving we used to go to the Holiday Inn. It will always be some of my best memories coming here.

"I've taken 10 to 15 years off racing cars, trucks and freestyle and all of that stuff but now I'm back here racing. My son Haiden started racing motocross because he wanted to, I didn't want him to but hey, what can you do right? I know the risks, all the travelling involved plus with my schedule being so busy but he's my boy so I have to make time. For him to become really good it takes so much time and effort, but we're doing it and we'll see where we go. He's so in to it and motivated to do well that it motivates me also. Then there are those memories I have with my dad, it's like, I have to do that again.

"I had a feeling that my kids were going to be involved in some type of racing – it was kind of inevitable I guess. My 12 year old daughter races karts and she won the championship this year and my three year old just started riding, it's what we do, it's what we enjoy.

"This is my vacation! I shut my phone off and I hang with the kids and ride myself, it's quality time as a family. With all the Mulisha stuff, the Deegan 38 business, the rally cars and off-road race trucks I don't have much time spare but I enjoy it and that's what life should be about. I look at it and think fair few guys can actually say they're truly doing what really want in life. The sport has served me well.

"Most guys turn to 30 and they're all beat up and have to get another job working for someone else but I'm my own boss doing what I love. I'm beat up and I'm hurting but I'll throw my gear on and go and race that motocross track because I love it – it's what I grew up doing and I'm happy when I'm at the motocross track. Now with kids racing I'm going to be around a lot longer I guess."



focus is on the future stars of the sport – that's where the industry is looking and that's why they are there with all their support. Racers like little (and I do mean little) Ryder DiFrancesco are literally 'mini' versions of professional racers. They have full support already and look every inch the real deal. Ryder DiFrancesco is just one of several names you'll be hearing more of. He's been on Cobra's support programme (Cobra motorcycles dominate the 50cc auto and 65cc classes in America) for a couple of years now and delivered titles but has now signed to Team Green on the KX65 and for the future in the hope of following the footsteps of current AMA supercross and motocross champion Ryan Villopoto. From what I've seen in his ability – and that of the team around him – he has every chance to go the distance.

Obviously the Mini O's is a major motocross

race but it's so much more. Like so often demonstrated in our sport, it's almost a way of life. So much so there's a church service and prayers with the MXers for Jesus crew and you can even get your bike blessed. Now that is definitely something I haven't seen before! There's a load of entertainment laid on each night too – FMX demos (by 'Mad' Mike and others), a Miss Mini O's contest where the winner gets to present the riders their trophies on the podium, mini moto racing, movie nights, Karaoke, live bands, kids art and crafts, the now traditional Thor Thanksgiving party and get this, even a pie eating contest. No I didn't enter – I know when I'm beaten!

As a whole the event is huge. There are massive truck and trailers everywhere and although it isn't quite as big as the Loretta Lynn's Amateur Nationals (which is



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TIM FERRY FORMER FACTORY RACER AND MXDN WINNER

"I first rode here when I was nine years old and I've been coming here almost my whole life. There were times when I didn't because I was busy doing my pro stuff but now I have my kid and he's racing and I'm not, I guess I'll be back year after year. It's fun being back now as a father. Evan doesn't quite understand the history of the event but he's making his own history.

"The event is so nice; it's gotten so much bigger now I think they should look at doing it over two weeks. I'm not a crazy minibike dad, I try to give him good advice by talking to him quietly, and a lot of the time I try not to tell him what to do at all. He likes to ride and they have to learn on their own too. He knows I'm there to ask if he wants advice, we have a good time and there's no pressure on him. If he doesn't want to race I'm okay with that too. He was around towards the tail end of my career so he understands it quite a bit, he went to a lot of supercrosses. He knows what I achieved and I still ride so hopefully my actions are better than words."

regarded as the biggest MX race in the world in respect of entrants) it's chaotic to say the least. Golf buggies are bombing around everywhere with adults and kids who are so small they have to drive them standing up to reach the foot pedals! On top of that there are minibike and race bikes tearing around making tracks in the paddock. You can even just fire up your bike and practice starts anywhere you want. Clearly there's no health and safety act to follow, or maybe there is and the officer has been gagged and bound and thrown in the back of someone's trunk for the weekend!

One difference that surprised me more though was the circuit itself. As I expected the soil was groomed to perfection with seemingly not a stone in sight and I expected the track to rough up with plenty of gnarly sections like we often see at the AMA Nationals but it didn't turn out that way. The circuit rode fast with plenty of

obstacles but they weren't as steep or technical as I thought they would be. To be fair it was all a bit easy.

Added to that, just when the track was getting technical they went out and graded it and with short races the racing wasn't as good as I expected or hoped it to be. Even Monster Energy boss Mitch Covington, whose son Thomas was racing agreed that maybe they should look at letting the tracks get rougher and have longer races for the A class riders to help with their transition to professional racing. Mitch has been to GPs and racing in Europe so maybe that has influenced his beliefs. Arguably that's one area where Europe has the edge but horses for courses and all that.

One thing is for sure, amateur and youth motocross in the good ol' US of A is only really the same in name as the European equivalent.





PLASTIC FANTASTIC!

PORTUGAL'S #1 OFF-ROAD EXPORT - THAT'S NUNO LARANJEIRA
- VISITS FELLOW PORTUGUESE PEEPS POLISPORT TO PERUSE
THEIR PLASTIC PRODUCTS AND PRACTICES...

Words and photos by **Nuno Laranjeira**

I grew up with the knowledge that the industrial force of Portugal was situated mainly in the north of the country, in and around the city of Porto which was some 300km from where I was born and bred in Lisbon. Later in life, when I got involved in the two-wheel world through my job as a photographer, I found that travelling to the north of the country became a constant chore as I reported on race events or shot new bikes. Each job meant a minimum three-hour drive north – time I generally spent wondering why the only weekly bike magazine in the country was so far from the majority of the Portuguese off-road scene. World enduro, trial and motocross events were always, traditionally, held in the north and factories such as Nau Helmets, AJP or Polisport are still based there.

After the revolution in 1974, the country

developed even further in the north, partly through the manufacturing and export business. The motorcycling industry was never a big player in the country – with the clothing factories having the biggest slice of the job market – but there was considerable industry around motorcycle and bicycle accessories, from which a surviving few still remain active in a country sunk in debt.

Surviving in adverse times is a big challenge for small and medium-sized companies and it boils down to the entrepreneurial spirit of people, like Polisport's founder Pedro Araújo, to keep the boat afloat. He doesn't only see the country's small rectangle in the world map – he keeps thinking big and global. I'm still not sure if it is the colder weather up north or the great food but, in my knowledge, examples like Polisport are rare things in the south...

Based in Carregosa – a small parish

between Porto and Agueda – Polisport has been producing plastic parts for off-road bikes for over 30 years and by concentrating exclusively on developing techniques in the plastics' field they went a step further than their competitors and developed technical gems like the award winning IPD (In Mould Plastic Decals). This innovative technology – blending graphics inside the plastic – got them a contract to supply OEM parts directly to KTM and Gas Gas.

I've visited Polisport before – back in 2006, when they were just putting the final touches on their IPD technique – so when they asked Scott Cannon from Apico to send someone to testify how they've progressed, I felt proud to do it, particularly being able to speak with Pedro in his own language and knowing that the history of Polisport is entangled with his own life story as an off-road aficionado.

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THE BEGINNING

Before it all began, Pedro knew nothing about making plastics and had to ask everyone he could for a bit of technical and industrial knowledge, to help out on this quest.

"Back in the seventies, it was hard to get replacement plastic parts for the bikes I was riding," he says. "At that time all the plastics we had for sale in Portugal had to be imported from Italy and it was literally an adventure to import whatever product. So, as a result, we had a short supply of everything... I was only 19 in 1978 and still at school, but felt that I could do something. The opportunity was there to be taken as no-one in the country was manufacturing any plastics for bikes."

He set up his workshop in an extension of his parents' house and started to work with glass fibre as a base to be moulded. After many trial-and-error attempts, the first mudguard was born. "I then got a part-time job during the summer holidays so I could earn enough to buy a bucket of polyester resin. Back then it cost me the equivalent of 90 euros and, when I finally managed to earn the money, school had already started and I found myself with a bucket of unused resin. My only chance was to risk a 'mass production' of mudguards and then try to sell them all. The image of 300 mudguards spread all over my workshop and garden was priceless. I was then able to show them to the stores I used to buy my plastics from - they liked what they saw and placed the first orders..."

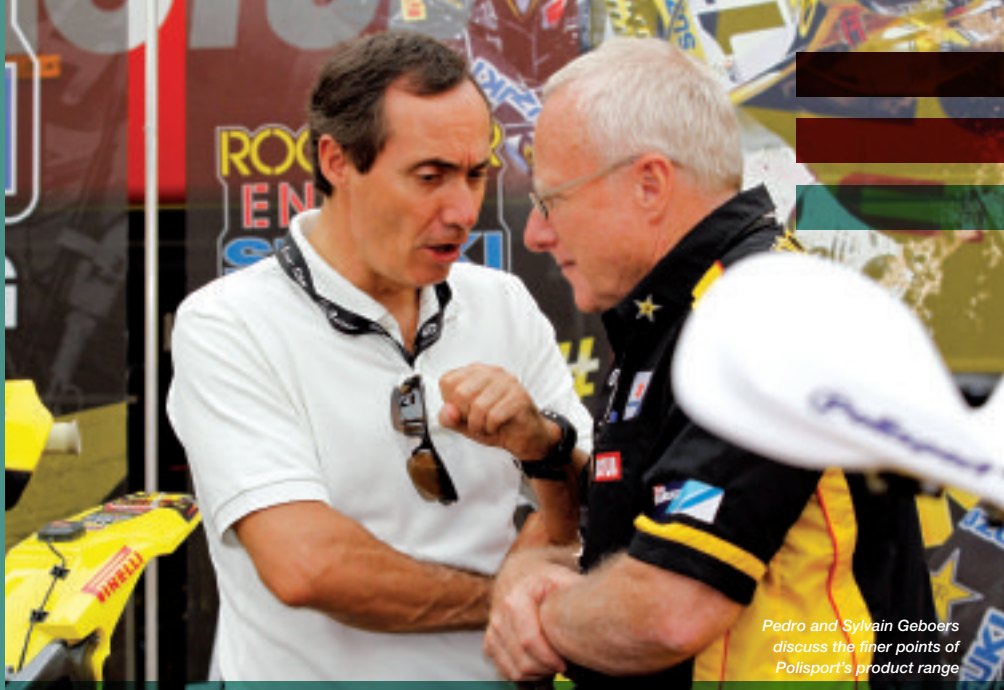
Right from the early stages of this new venture, Araújo started to pay attention to the way Polisport products were being packaged because, until that time, the vast majority of plastic products came in bulk, with many items piled inside a single plastic bag. From the start of the '80s, all the plastics coming out of the Portuguese factory would be packaged individually, with a nice Polisport branded card. Consequently, consumers assumed that it was an Italian manufacturer! Even the shops thought it was inconceivable that a national manufacturer could make such a quality product and present it so well... It's sad but true and it only reveals the mentality of that time - that a product could only be good if it was imported"

EM INGLÊS (IN ENGLISH)!

Polisport was enjoying a good expansion in the European market by the end of the '80s and - after a good acceptance at the first trade show they attended in Cincinnati (before the Indianapolis show was established) - they started to export to the American market. Their first clients were the very famous twin-brothers Tom and Dan White - aka The White Bros.

Apart from being gigantic, the American market is also very demanding and the Portuguese factory had to have a step-by-step approach there, as the quantities ordered were not exactly the same as they were used to - "The first orders we had were in the tens of thousands, so we had to increase our production immensely - sub-contracting and all. By the end of the '90s we were enjoying our best moment there and totally able to respond to their requirements."

Pedro is equally positive about the British market - "England was where all off-road sport historically evolved from and the passion for off-road sport keeps regenerating itself, so we always wanted to be represented there if we wanted to be taken seriously. We started working with a company called Lintek in the '80s, followed by BikeAlert at the beginning of the '90s. We then switched to Apico in 2002 - they have a strong presence in the British off-road market and it has been a healthy relationship."



Pedro and Sylvain Geboers discuss the finer points of Polisport's product range

PLASTICMAN!

THE SUPER BOSS WHO'S COMMITTED TO THE CAUSE...

Pedro Araújo is not a superhero but in many ways he has gone beyond the definition of the typical Portuguese 'patrão' (boss) by showing a dedication to his work in levels I only thought possible in other cultures. The boss in Portugal is usually the guy who sits in his office and only goes out for a lengthy lunch, rarely meeting his employees, but not Pedro...

"What still moves me in this business is my passion for off-road bikes and the management side of the company," says Pedro. "I wouldn't work so many hours

without feeling tired if it wasn't like that - if it was something that didn't interest me, I would just be bored and want to go home. I feel that I'm truly lucky to be able to do this. The success of Polisport as a company is the result of my will to keep innovating and the commitment of all the people who work here and share the same vision - without them Polisport would not have succeeded. Every single worker in the company knows exactly what our mid and long-term goals are and we have fantastic team work."



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A fine example of Polisport's Plastic Decor Plus products



PLASTICTALK!

THE POLISPORT GLOSSARY

There are quite a lot of abbreviations for the various technologies used in their products – some exclusive to the Portuguese company. Here's a rundown...

IPD: InMold Plastic Decals – the process of blending graphics inside the plastic, so they won't peel off, which is an alternative to decals.

PD+: Plastic Decor Plus – this one is an extension of what they do with the IPD but applies to the whole surface of the plastic part. For example, Polisport can cover a front fender with a brushed steel finish without the weight of the metal – a well printed decal will do it.

DI: Dual Injection – with this technology it's possible to simultaneously inject polypropylene and rubber in the same part, still retaining its flexibility, lightness and resistance to impact. This is very 'handy' for hand-guards.

DGP: Durable Glass Polypropylene – this special polypropylene is what makes the plastics last and still retain their gloss finish and bright colours, as well as their resistance and flexibility.

UFx: Universal Fender Fixing – with this system, it's possible to fit the same mudguard on 95 per cent of off-road bikes without any drilling.

INNOVATION IS THE WORD

In 2010, Polisport was recognised as the most innovative company in the country – that's competing with companies from every industry. Their most prized invention – the IPD – is the best evidence of their intentions. The whole IPD movement actually started at Polisport, through the manufacturing of bicycle helmets – blending the decals with the plastic so they wouldn't peel off. It was pretty obvious that it wouldn't stop there and the team soon started to think about how to apply this to off-road bike parts. What followed was quite the saga, as Pedro went in pursuit of technology that could work successfully in mass production. For that to happen, he created a new department inside Polisport and paid a group of people to work full-time on the development of IPD technology – taking three years to get it right.

"Our aim is to keep innovation right at the top of our priorities so we can continuously release new and distinct products to the market, through new technologies – that's what we love to do," says Pedro. "I mean, what's the point of just producing the same parts year after year? I keep saying to everyone that we're here to make different and better products than the ones the market already has. In our company 'DNA', we have the will to be a specialist in plastics – that's our core business and we want to be known for that. We really don't want to be known as the company that also sells clothing or helmets."

There was never a history of plastic manufacturing in Portugal so Polisport always had to present itself to the world for what it did – there was no association automatically made, like people associate Germany with cars, for instance.

"Getting to the point where KTM approach us to start producing their OEM plastics only means we've been doing a good job. I mean, Italy is closer to them and they have a tradition in plastic..."

It's been a long journey for Polisport, since it was mistaken for an Italian company, so that's the kind of recognition which obviously makes Araújo a very proud man...

THE FUTURE

The world of plastics is a dream for any creative designer, as almost whatever comes up on the drawing board can be replicated in real life, through plastic. So Polisport has just started to go a bit further – away from the basic fenders and handguards – and is now presenting the market with accessories like the motopad (a bike mat replacement), track markers and the instantly successful foldable pit bike stand (the official MXGP stand).

They undoubtedly have good intentions towards the final consumer, as over the years they have developed and delivered plastics that have their build quality and durability stretched to the highest possible level. The new Husky's are all coming out with the Portuguese plastics, so replacements are already in production (not that you're going to need them that soon!). And for 2014 they have even done a revamp of their logo and changed all their packaging – proving that aesthetics are never put in second place in the Portuguese company.

Hoping to add to their well known list of OEM clients – KTM, Husqvarna, Gas Gas, Rieju, BMW, Triumph and FLY – Polisport has recently started to pave the way for a new conquest, with Honda and Yamaha showing interest in IPD plastics. Previously, the attention of the Japanese manufacturers is something that they never dared dream of but is currently possible because the IPD is one of the few things Asia can't produce – yet!

So against all odds it seems that this Portuguese company is leading the way when it comes to plastics innovation.



TOP SECRET!

WE HEAD TO HOLLAND FOR SOME TOP SECRET TESTING WITH
YAMAHA EUROPE'S TEST GURU ERIK EGGENS...

Words by Ed Bradley Photos by Guus van Goethem





Being a test rider ain't as glamorous as you'd think



I'm a curious kind of guy – I always have been – and one thing that I've been curious about since the age of nine is who the rider on the front of the manufacturers' brochures is. As a nine year old I would look at the riders in total amazement and think 'wow, these guys are awesome' – I mean, to be so good that you have your pictures on the manufacturer's marketing material means you've got to be pretty cool, hey?

Even as an adult I'm curious about who the riders are and now my racing career is over I've been getting to meet some of the riders who develop the engines and suspension on the bikes that you ride now as well as the managers of development teams within the factories. These people are very clever and great at what they do and I'm fascinated to know what it must be like to work for a manufacturer, especially when you see the factory, hand built bikes in Japan, looking super trick and ultra bling.

I initially met Erik Eggers – Yamaha's European test rider – at a new model launch. Erik has been a very successful rider in the 125cc World Championship finishing third in 2001 (as team-mate to Jamie Dobb, the year he won the championship), was leading the 2002 championship until he broke his leg and then finished fifth in the 2003 championship while as developing the new KTM 250F.

Once Erik finished racing at GP level, the position at Yamaha became available for a development test rider. "All the way through my racing things have fallen in to place in a good way although there were three or four months when I finished racing where I didn't know what was going to happen," explains Erik. "Yamaha got in touch and said to me that they were changing things around in the company and asked if I would be their development/test rider and things dropped in to place again."

Erik's Grand Prix racing career started at the age of 15 in 1994 and finished at the end of 2009 and he's still competing in the Dutch MX2 championship where he finished third in 2012 behind Jeffrey Herlings and our own Jake Nicholls – Erik still hauls ass!

The second time I met Erik was during the 2014 YZ 250F test. When he told me that something they'd been testing was the thickness of the engine mounting brackets that hold the engine and frame together I was blown away! If the bracket material is too thick then there is more rigidity in the chassis and too thin and the engine/frame has too much flex. According to Erik this is quite an easy part to test because the differences are noticeable when riding.

At this point I was getting giddy because I was talking to the guy on the front of the manufacturer brochure and discussing what prototype parts that he has tested have made it on to the all-new 2014 machine. I was also beginning to find out a little about the world of motocross bike development and that some of it happens on our doorstep in Holland.

After I returned home a conversation with Yamaha UK quickly lead to me asking Erik if it was possible to go and meet him and find out even more about his role as a factory Yamaha test rider and what goes on. We got a double thumbs up and I was soon on my way to Yamaha Europe which is so big I'm sure you can see it from outer space. The place is massive and when I was greeted by Erik and Jeffry de Vries (Erik's boss) I mentioned it and they both looked at me with big smiles saying – "yes, it's massive. It's like a small village!"

In this village there are three massive buildings covering a huge area. One has all the parts for Yamaha machines covering Marina, road and off road machines. Then there is the four storey office building for Yamaha Europe and Yamaha Netherlands and the





last building is the workshops that house the marine, road and off-road where one side is for Europe and the other for Netherland Yamaha.

Jeffrey and Erik's office is small and neat with drawn blinds over the window and glass doors that lead in to the workshop. The blinds are drawn because they have prototype products that we are not allowed to see and that means we won't be having a tour. How cool is that? We are actually only feet away from top-secret Yamaha projects.

Erik told us that sometimes he isn't allowed in because Yamaha doesn't directly employ him so no secrets for Erik either! There are even office staff that don't have access to the workshop. That is how tight they keep their development stuff under wraps and in secret. It's like CSI where you have to have the correct level of access to gain entry in to restricted areas.

Looking in from the outside I'd imagine being the Yamaha test rider is a pretty awesome job so I asked the question – is it as good as it sounds? “Yes,” says Erik immediately. “We test three or four times a year in America, test in Japan and sometimes

evaluate the factory bikes for the Rinaldi factory race team. Then there's the stuff we do here in Holland. Some of it is secret testing and some we do on normal track days.

“Another part of my job is to go to racing events for marketing purposes to keep in touch with what is happening, who is riding what as well as their riding skills. An example of this is that I went to Sardinia to watch the ISDE. This means that I have a good understanding of what is happening to the bikes, not just Yamahas but all manufacturers and what riders are showing signs of potential for the future.”

So Erik tests the current production machines, factory racing machines and future machines too – what's not to like?

Yamaha put a lot of effort in to the development and bike set up. When we did both the 250 and the 450 tests in Italy and France, the test riders (journalists) were offered the bike with the standard settings for the first session, Erik's track settings for the second session and then we could make our own adjustments for the remaining sessions. Yamaha is the only manufacturer that have had their test rider present and given us a preferred

track setting.

The test Erik is carrying out today during my visit is to find suitable mapping programs for the Akrapovic silencer and a Twin Air filter cage. The filter cage and silencer are both part of the GYTR accessory pack so when these things come with suggested mapping you now know who and where it was developed.

These are small tests. When Yamaha bring out new models there are many days of testing and the riders start pounding the laps from 8am until the tracks close, day after day until they have exhausted all the possible settings as well as themselves! These tests are carried out in secret and Jeffrey de Vries – who spanners for Erik when he races but also tests Yamaha road bikes including the occasional MotoGP machine (I think these two guys may just have the best job at Yamaha Europe) – points out that hiring motocross circuits is a drop in the ocean compared to when they privately hire road race circuits to test!

Production development parts are being continually tested throughout the year in three locations – Japan, Europe and America. Each product is tested, a report completed and then



Erik is pumped to get the chance to hang out with the very famous Ade Bradley...



Ed tests Erik's settings and is reet impressed

sent back to the specific department manager so that his team can correlate all the feedback that has been gathered. From this feedback and information there will be a general pattern of good, average or poor that the Japanese will be able to make a decision on whether the product/part will make it on to your future bike.

Depending on what part they are testing depends on how the feedback is measured. A lot of the testing is done by rider feedback... how it feels and then other testing is done with equipment that measure, for example, exhaust gases and temperature, coolant temperature, throttle position and rpm, as well as suspension sensors.

Engine work is also carried out using dynos too and occasionally the stopwatch comes out and lap times are compared. The focus is on producing parts that are an improvement in performance and durability so that it creates better reliability for the bike. If a part ticks all these boxes there is a chance of it making it on to a new model.

On the flip side to production stuff there is the factory race team testing which is on a different level to production testing. Erik has a

big smile on his face when he talks about the new factory 250F and is excited to see what the 2014 season will bring for its pilots!

Of course reliability is less important to the racing teams who only have to get through a weekend of racing compared to your full season – or two, or three seasons – of practice and racing! These bikes are full-on performance machines and as you might expect, the Japanese bikes hold the highest prestige as the manufacturers want to win in their own country.

The test bikes in Japan have the most equipment on them for measuring data when it comes to gathering information. The Japanese race bikes that you see so called 'secret spy pictures' of are special hand built bikes, crafted personally for the individual team rider so the goodies that you see on them don't always come through to production because they are built specifically for one rider...now there's some bragging rights for you!

After our day of testing I was curious to know what makes a good test/development rider. "There are a number of things," says Erik. "I am always learning about how the bike works and what new products will do in their performance

so having a good understanding of the bike is important. It is then even more important to switch off any ideas that I might have about what to expect before testing the parts.

"You have to remain open-minded and really pay attention to how the bike is performing, remaining focused on the specific part you are testing. For example, when testing different mapping you have to remember how the bike was before so you can make a good judgment as to whether it is better, same or worse during your next test.

"At the end of all testing we go back to where we started the day from to check that after all the different settings that have been tested we've made progress from where we started. If you lose focus it is easy to get confused with the bike's performance so it is important to make the final check on your progress and then last of all it is really important to be honest. It's great if the part is an improvement but if the part has a negative effect and nothing is said then there is a chance that under performing parts could make it on to a bike which would be no good for the bike or the Yamaha brand."

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Jack Kelly was flying until hit by injury



BEST OF 2013!

WHO SHONE IN LAST YEAR'S MAJOR CHAMPIONSHIPS...

As 2014 begins Rage wishes everyone all the very best for the New Year. Before launching headlong into what is the most comprehensive youth season ever let's take one last look back at 2013.

Picking an overall youth rider of the year is the easiest choice ever as Conrad Mewse wins this hands down. And just in case you didn't know, Conrad is the reigning World, European and Dutch 85cc champion – it just doesn't get any better than this.

Picking a rider of the year for his performances on home soil and the Rage vote goes to Jordan Eccles. Coming from the back in one of the toughest competitions of the year (Elite Youth Cup BW85 division) and then once in front holding his nerve Jordan was impressive. Long gone are the days worrying if Jordan is going to stay on as the only question

now is how fast is he going to go? Winning a truly classic full on competitive e22 SW85 title, Charlie Cole is my runner up here.

In the Rookies winning a title apiece with a certain professional polish, Rob Davidson and Brad Todd finished as best of the under 17s crop but dishing out an award in this section my choice would be a 'Mr Entertainer' going for Matthew Callaghan. Third overall in Maxxis MXY2 and fourth overall in the EYC doesn't anywhere near do the Callaghan show justice. And for anyone who witnessed his explosive antics – carding seven EYC heat wins along the way – you will know exactly what I mean.

Moving on to who is the unluckiest rider of the year? Well that's Jack Kelly who was seriously injured when almost over the line as ACU British Youth Nationals champ and

now sidelined from racing has to be the most unfortunate. There were others too with one hand on a trophy only to then find themselves robbed by injury – Rickie Roderick and Ike Carter can feel hard done to.

The one to keep your eyes on award goes to Joel Rizzi. At the close of 2012 and following a few stirring performances as an eight year old Joel had merely suggested he had a good future in the sport. At the close of the 2013 season with National wins on the CV there is absolutely no doubt about it - watch out for Joel as he goes for Euro and Brit 65cc honours in 2014. Running Joel a close second is Charlie Heyman. Winning 33 times from 33 starts in the GT Cup and picking up an MX Masters title in just his second season on Autos really is filling potential – even if it is on the first rung of the ladder.



Scottish hope Jay Lamb

MAXXIS MANIA!

MXV2 RIDER LIST CONFIRMED...

Just a few days before Xmas the ACU unwrapped the rider list for the 2014 Maxxis MXV2 series. Well having said this they actually initially just put out 29 names of 40 as the missing 11 will be selected later by committee from the over subscribed list of entrants.

The dates and venues are also confirmed with the series running over five rounds. It all kicks off at Lyng followed by a round at Canada Heights. The venue for round three is yet to be confirmed while round four will be at the new Scottish circuit – Drumclog. The series finale will be at FatCat in September.

From the already confirmed riders Liam Knight, Tom Neal, and Josh Gilbert are the first three listed and they represent a tasty trio. As do the next three – Gradie Featherstone,

Todd Kellett and Will Keogh. Also expect Oli Osmaston, Mitchell Lewis, Jay Lamb and Tony Saunders to all go well. Irish runner Jason Meara should be a tough cookie and with a sprinkling of two-strokes in the hands of Jay Hague and Robert Yates in particular the race interest is spread.

At the foot of the list having one final tilt at an ACU youth crown is Connor Clark and if he hits top form he will be one to watch. One of the youngest in the fray is southern firebrand Henry Siddiqui who will be just fifteen when the series kicks off – he has just switched from KTM to Honda and should run somewhere around the top six.

As things stand with some empty berths yet to be filled the Rage tips for the first podium are Liam Knight, Todd Kellett and Connor Clark.

Connor Clark will be having one last bash at an ACU youth title



NKOTB!

SAY HELLO TO THE ALL-NEW OFF ROAD MOTOR SPORT ASSOCIATION...

With a whole heap of publicity surrounding the two major youth series clashing – that's the British Youth Nationals and Elite Youth Cup – let's just hope they can somehow rejig things and dodge the double date clash already pencilled in. Championships which produce fully worthy champions has to be the goal but having said this with yet more series joining the fray it's going to be near impossible not to clash somewhere.

The Off Road Motor Sports association – www.offroadmotorsportuk.co.uk – is one of the newcomers who are proudly announcing they are running Nationals and with a quality list of tracks booked no one could argue with their intent. At youth level they are running Auto through to Rookie and as an organisation they have a whole lot more to offer.

Rage asked ORMS coordinator Darren Batchelor for a brief rundown on the new set up and he made the following points.

"Off Road Motorsport UK is the trading name of YMSA Ltd and formed in autumn 2013 – it's the new dynamic Motorsport Association. Since the launch we have been inundated with clubs and practice facilities wishing to join from all corners of the British Isles, from motocross, trials and enduro clubs/riders.

"In 2014, ORMS UK riders will be able to try and qualify to be crowned the 'champion of their group'. This will be throughout the association from Auto upwards working towards a Semi Final and culminating with a two day Grand Final. There will also be a stand alone team event featuring riders from Auto 50cc right through to the MX1 Adults.

"The ORMS UK National Series kicks off at Mepal in March is open to all riders – not just licensed riders – and each round will run over two days with entertainment being offered at some of the rounds during the evening.

"Just to name a few riders from the Youth and Adults already booked in for the National series they are – Callum Green, Connor Dennis, Dylan Spencer, Luke Houghton, Mitchell Warhurst, Matt Porter, Kyde Marlow, Darryl Maxwell, Piers Skinner, Curtis Blamey, Gareth Artus and Dan Thornhill.

"There will be trophies per event as well as prizes for holeshots and other 'spot prizes' which have been kindly donated by the many sponsors of the series.

"ORMS UK has a five year plan in place and our aim is to try and work with other like-minded associations to give the riders and their families what they want at competitive prices while not losing sight of safety or to be unnecessarily restrictive.

"Our aim within the next year or so is to take our National Series abroad and we are already working closely with clubs and tracks to achieve this."

ORMS 2014

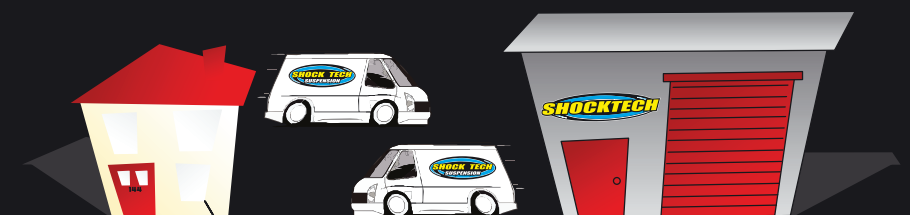
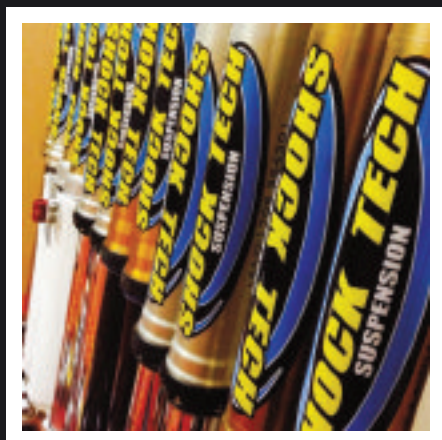
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- Round 2** – April 5/6 – Sherwood
- Round 3** – May 24/25 – Salters Lane
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- Round 6** – August 30/31 – Whitby



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INDOOR RACE SERIES IS READY TO ROLL...

It's going to be the biggest and best Arenacross series to date and it all kicks off at the Belfast Odyssey Arena on January 17/18. The two opening rounds are followed a week later with a single gig at the LG Arena, Birmingham before visiting Liverpool, Newcastle and Sheffield in February then ending on March 1 in London.

With seven rounds taking the indoor season right up to the start of the outdoor season there is a good sprinkling of top talent in the youth ranks all keen to put an early season marker down.

In the 65s Bobby Bruce could well be running off with a title. At just nine years old BB finished the 2013 outdoor season with some flying shows at the GT Cup in particular and he's a strong contender for outdoor titles in 2014. Showing up well in last year's indoor gigs is always a good guide so watch out for #79 Bobby 'Wayne' Bruce as he goes into bat. Looking around for another strong challenger and Buster Hart will be going flat out in an effort

to take the title back to Newcastle.

When winning the 65cc title last year Finley 'Rossi' Beard nailed four wins from four finals and although he's now moved up to the SW85 class he still looks like the one to beat. 11 year old Rossi from Preston has the perfect compact style for indoors and he is most looking forward to the Echo Arena round in Liverpool. In this one Passion Racing Kawasaki pilot George Sim Mutch could also prove an interesting watch as could fourth place finisher in last year's series Adam Collings together with new section upgrade Preston Williams.

As the wheels get bigger the challenge gets tougher and there's a gaggle of BW85 runners standing out as choice picks. Aaron Booker didn't do the series last year but he could be a surprise package. One guy who did race the 2013 series and showed he can run with the best was Harry Kimber. HK #78 will no doubt go well even though it's his first season aboard a BW machine.

Choosing a couple of favourites for the class

and it's not hard to underline the names of South African runner Marcus Phelps and indoor supremo Dylan Woodcock. For 2014 the Phelps family are basing themselves in Kent and as Marcus well proved in 2012 with his runner-up position in the EYC he's a super hard act to beat. Dylan was last year's Arenacross champ on smallies and with previous indoor crowns at 65cc and Auto level he's a well polished performer roof or no roof. Another to watch out for could be banger jockey Ryan Vickers as he takes on the field riding for MXW Racing.

Looking across the Rookie entry and for sure a battle royale awaits as the likes of Rickie Roderick, Todd Kellett, Jay Thomas, Nicolas Phelps, Charlie Putnam, Lee Perfect, Mitch Lewis, Billy King, Ben Harrison and Joele Hart take to the line. Roderick, Kellett and Thomas are the tough guys hoping to convert outdoor form while South African Phelps is a bit of an unknown quantity but after finishing fourth in last year's SA championships you can expect good things from him too.

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